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BAKERY REVIEW

Business Magazine for Bakery & Confectionery Professionals



Business
Ups & Downs in Cocoa Prices

Feature
2026 Valentine's Day Bakery Trends and Insights

Flavours
The Slow Alchemy of Caramel

Pastry
Pastry Fillings: Where Craft Meets Innovation

Bakery
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Editorial



Greetings and welcome to the first issue of the Bakery Review for 2026.

We hope your year is off to a sweet start, with freshly baked favourites bringing warmth and cheer to every day. As the New Year begins, the baking industry is entering a phase of renewed momentum, driven by evolving consumer preferences, creative craftsmanship, and dynamic business thinking.

Bakery products are part of our everyday meals, so keeping them fresh and safe really matters. Our cover story looks at how packaging, ingredients and smart processes help protect quality, hygiene and taste, while earning consumer trust.

The business story examines how rising cocoa prices, driven by climate change and supply shortages, are disrupting the market. It looks at chocolate both as a key ingredient in the bakery industry and as a standalone confectionery product.

Our special feature shares insights from chefs on how Valentine's Day bakery trends are evolving, with consumers increasingly seeking nostalgia, sustainability, health-conscious choices, and unique experiences.

The article on pastry fillings delves into the latest innovations in pastry fillings, from bold new flavors to creative textures and indulgent mouthful, showing how fillings are taking centre stage in modern baking.

Our special story on caramel explores why this sweet favourite never loses its charm. Beloved for its rich, buttery notes and comforting sweetness, caramel is both a classic and a canvas for innovation.

Finally, we examine one of the most critical aspects of the baking industry, how baked products should be handled immediately after baking. From post-bake cooling and contamination control to extending shelf life and the complex role of refrigeration.

Our commitment remains to bring you a perspective that does more than celebrate baking artistry but also offers insights that support strategy, growth and new opportunities beyond the oven.



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BAKERY REVIEW

INSIDE



18 COVER STORY
Freshness in Bakery Products

26 BUSINESS
Ups & Downs in Cocoa Prices

34 FEATURE
2026 Valentine's Day Bakery Trends and Insights

40 FLAVOURS
The Slow Alchemy of Caramel

46 PASTRY
Pastry Fillings: Where Craft Meets Innovation

52 BAKERY
Handling Post Bake

56 SPOTLIGHT
Marzipan: The Sculptable Delight

DEPARTMENTS

04 Event

10 News Scan

62 Product Preview

64 Interview

Aahar 2026

The International Food & Hospitality Fair



The forthcoming edition of AAHAR 2026 - the International Food & Hospitality Fair, to be held during March 10-14, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, is the most awaited B2B event in Asia. It is the largest fair in the food & beverage and the hospitality sectors in India. The 40th edition will feature new trends in F&B as well as hospitality services, food processing, culinary tech, retail and new innovations.

The specialised B2B event for the food & beverage and hospitality industry has grown by leaps & bounds during the recent years and is today regarded as a well-known destination for global vendors and sourcing professionals from the food & beverage and hospitality industry across the planet.

AAHAR is being organised by India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) with support of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), Agricultural and Processed Food Products Development Authority (APEDA) and apex industry associations, Association of Resource Companies for Hospitality Industry of India (ARCHII), Hotel and Restaurant Equipment Manufacturers Association of India (HOTREMAI), All India Food Processors Association (AIFPA), Forum of Indian Food Importers (FIFI).

The fair is poised to grow in size this year covering over 1,00,000 sqm.+ (Gross Area), with more than 1700 exhibitors. The show will have overseas participants from major countries this year. The 18th edition of 'Culinary Art India' will simultaneously be held at the same venue during the show. This year more than 1 lakh visitors are expected at the show.

The fair features a wide range of Food Products, Machinery, F&B equipment, Hospitality and Décor Solutions, and confectionery items from participants from India and overseas. The fair has elicited participation from foreign companies. Apart from the meaningful display, the fair offers an insight to operational and food safety concerns and innovations to become energy-efficient, finding budget friendly raw materials boosting productivity, while still aiming for greater profitability.

It is expected that a large number of trade visitors will visit Aahar 2026. These include top echelons of the Hotel and Hospitality industry including CEOs, General Managers, Executive Chefs, Executive Housekeepers, Purchase Managers, etc. Besides, senior representatives from catering industry and academic institutions, training hotel management professionals will also visit the fair.

Besides the potential to foster business revenues, Aahar also provides an effective platform for the players across the global food & beverage and hospitality industry to disseminate/gather relevant information and gauge ongoing and future trends, which can greatly benefit the participants at the fair.

The forthcoming mega event can be the right place for importers, overseas trade delegations and Indian players in the food & beverage and hospitality space, and also for policy makers and media personnel to exchange knowledge and information. India's food retail industry is also going through an impressive growth phase. Especially, in the backdrop of the impressive growth potential of the Indian food services and food retail industry and with the revival of the Indian hospitality industry, the relevance of a mega event like Aahar simply cannot be overlooked.

Going by the emerging and futuristic trends in the Indian food & beverage and hospitality industry, we can safely assume that the forthcoming edition of Aahar is expected to grace by impressive numbers of visitors.

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Winning moments of Juniores Pastry World Cup 2026

Just over a month after Italian cuisine was recognised as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, SIGEP World has become a key meeting point for the international foodservice industry, bringing together markets, consumption patterns and business visions. The event, curated by Italian Exhibition Group at Rimini Expo Centre, ran from 16 to 20 January, reaffirming its position as a global platform for the gelato, pastry, chocolate, coffee, bakery, and pizza industries. This was particularly significant, given the value of the out-of-home sector, which is worth €71 billion in Italy alone (source: Circana). The presence of the Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests, Francesco Lollobrigida – preceded by the Minister for Disabilities, Alessandra Locatelli – and the President of the Italian Trade Agency, Matteo Zoppas, highlighted the strategic importance of the industry and the development of human capital for its competitiveness.

The 2026 edition saw a significant increase in international participation, with a 33% rise in foreign exhibitors from 45 countries, alongside a strong and high-quality Italian presence. New entries include Canada, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Ecuador, Estonia, Serbia, Singapore, Nepal, and the Czech Republic. This global initiative received a strong response, confirming the success of the previous edition: operators from 160 countries, with almost one in four visitors coming from abroad. The Top Buyer Program, a strategic collaboration between the Italian Trade Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, played a crucial role in bringing 500 buyers from 75 countries to Rimini, with notable representation from the United States, India, Canada, China, Brazil, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Singapore. The encounter between supply and demand resulted in 5,650 business meetings, confirming SIGEP World as a working platform for international business development.

India was the Guest Country for 2026, with a delegation of 50 top buyers, institutional representatives, and exhibitors specialising in ice cream technology, confirming the dynamism of the Indian market in the foodservice and hospitality sectors. The 2026 edition also saw a significant increase in foreign press coverage, with a total of 802 accredited journalists, including many international correspondents from dozens of countries.

Gelato: A Strategic Lever for Global Foodservice

A cornerstone of SIGEP World's identity, artisan gelato remains not only a symbol of Italian excellence in 2026, but also a strategic asset for the global foodservice industry, capable of generating profit, differentiation, and new opportunities across various markets and formats. With Gelato Meets Chains, the event developed a project aimed at international restaurant, hotel, coffee shop and bakery chains, encouraging the inclusion of gelato in global menus. To reinforce this vision, the international campaign "What is Gelato?" and the guide "Gelato means Business" provided data, models, and concrete examples to demonstrate how gelato can generate high margins, seasonally adjusted consumption, and a rapid return on investment.

Luxury Food Experience: Food as a New Language of Hospitality

The Luxury Hotel Food Experience project also received significant attention, fostering a closer relationship between the hotel and foodservice industries. It found one of its fullest expressions at SIGEP World, showcasing breakfast as a true measure of contemporary hospitality. At Pastry Arena,



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breakfast was presented as a complete experience - a ritual that can become an economic lever and a means of differentiation for international hotels and formats.

Sustainability District: Supply Chains, Origins, Innovation

Sustainability has become a key focus of supply chain strategies, highlighted by the Sustainability District, which sparked an international dialogue on cocoa, coffee, and the new frontiers of sustainable food. The area connected producers, cooperatives, institutions, and companies across the entire value chain, bringing the voices of the countries of origin to the event, alongside technological solutions, energy innovations, and new models of cooperation. From Africa (Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania and Kenya) to Latin America (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Dominican Republic), the district showcased supply chains increasingly focused on transparency, market orientation and responsibility.

Cross-Cutting Projects: Supply Chains More Connected Than Ever

SIGEP World also highlighted that the foodservice industry is no longer operating in isolated sectors, but through increasingly interconnected supply chains. Cross-cutting projects like the Kitchen Equipment Hub, the Frozen Product Hub, and the Digital District demonstrated how equipment, frozen solutions, and digital technologies are now essential factors in format design, operational management, and international business growth.

There is growing momentum in relations between the Italian government and India. Within the framework of a broader strategic partnership between the two economies, we have invited a high-level delegation of more than 50 buyers from India, reflecting the depth of mutual interest and the expanding scope of bilateral cooperation.



Flavia Morelli
Director-SIGEP World

International Championships: A Proven Success

Completing the picture, the success of major international championships– from the Gelato World Cup (won by Singapore, followed by France and Argentina) to the Juniores Pastry World Cup (France secured the top spot, followed by South Korea and China), has reinforced SIGEP World as a global showcase for talent and expertise, further strengthening the connection between training, excellence, and the industry's future.

Sigep World: Key Foodservice Markets

Finally, the show's global profile is further strengthened by an international development strategy that extends far beyond Rimini. Upcoming events include SIGEP USA, scheduled for 24-26 March 2026 in Las Vegas, the SIGEP China roadshow in Shanghai in spring 2026, and SIGEP Asia, taking place 15-17 July 2026 in Singapore, all aimed at addressing some of the most dynamic areas of the global foodservice industry.

Italian Exhibition Group looks forward to hosting the next edition of SIGEP World at Rimini Expo Centre in January 2027.









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Barista Launches Festive Café Menu with Hazelnuts

Hazelnuts for India, an initiative dedicated to promoting premium-quality hazelnuts in the country, collaborated with Barista Coffee Company, one of India's leading home-grown coffee chains, to introduce a limited-edition holiday season menu with the campaign "Go HazelNUTS with Barista" across 150 Barista outlets in major metro cities in India. As part of the collaboration, an exclusive hazelnut menu was unveiled at a special launch event at Barista's flagship café in Vasant Vihar, New Delhi.

The event offered an immersive first look at the new hazelnut-based offerings, with the Hazelnut Crunchy Frappe, the Hazelnut Dry Latte, the Hazelnut Matcha Tea Cake and the Hazelnut Chocolate Tart, each crafted using premium hazelnuts chosen for their superior flavour, quality and texture.



Speaking at the launch, Mansi Ahuja, Hazelnuts India Representative, AMPRO Marketing said, "Go HazelNUTS with Barista campaign aims to place hazelnuts at the heart of the café experience. Through Hazelnuts for India, we want guests to discover hazelnuts in multiple forms, in their coffee, in their desserts and in their everyday indulgences, offering a healthy indulgent twist to their choices. The encouraging response at the launch reinforces our belief that hazelnuts have a natural place in India's evolving café culture."

On this collaboration, Rajat Agrawal, CEO, Barista Coffee Company, said, "We've always enjoyed experimenting with flavours and finding new ways to make every coffee moment feel a little more special. Over the years, our menu has continuously evolved to bring fresh, exciting, and premium tastes to coffee lovers across the country. Our new hazelnut-inspired offerings are another step in surprising our customers with choices that elevate their everyday moments. At Barista, we're committed to pushing boundaries and creating café experiences that feel both comfortingly familiar and refreshingly new."

Yummy Bee Makes Garden City Debut in Bengaluru

Yummy Bee, India's first chain of cafés dedicated to healthy dining, made a strong entry into Bengaluru's highly competitive outdoor dining market by launching three stores. The three stores are located on Hosur Sarjapur Road (HSR) in the city's southeast, J P Nagar in the city's south and in Koramangala, the city's IT hub in the southeast.

Speaking at the launch, Sandeep Jangala, Founder of Yummy Bee, said, "The young urban professionals in Bengaluru and those looking for healthy dining out options, now have a place to call their own. These three Yummy Bee cafes are just



the beginning and we will be adding another five over the next three months. We remain committed to offering sugar-free, maida/gluten-free and preservative-free healthier snacks and desserts, which have been a huge hit in Hyderabad."

Each store is spread over an area of 1,800 sq ft and offers both take-away as well as sit-in options.

Third Wave Coffee Opens its 200th Cafe in Mumbai

Third Wave Coffee, India's beloved coffee-first QSR brand, announced the opening of its 200th cafe, located in Sindhi Society, Chembur, Mumbai. The launch marked a significant milestone in the brand's national expansion and reflects its strong, sustained growth since 2016.



Speaking on achieving the milestone, Rajat Luthra, CEO, Third Wave Coffee, said, "Crossing 200 cafés is not just a numeric milestone, it reflects the trust of our community and the disciplined growth engine we have built over the years. Our focus has remained constant: build a sustainably scalable business and deliver a high-quality, consistent café experience across formats and geographies. With our roastery's 8× automation capability, we are now equipped to support up to 700 cafes, setting a strong foundation for the next phase of expansion. In Mumbai, this will be our 40th cafe and we plan to strengthen our presence in the region in the coming year as well. By next year, we aim to add 100 more cafés as we deepen our presence in both existing and new markets."

Chembur was selected for the 200th café owing to its growing café-going culture, strong concentration of young professionals and students and an established base of consumers who value premium, experience-led coffee spaces.

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Krispy Kreme Enters Jaipur with its First Store at World Trade Park

Krispy Kreme India, part of the Curefoods portfolio, announced the launch of its first store in Jaipur at World Trade Park. Known worldwide for its signature Original Glazed doughnut and its fresh made assortment, the brand is now bringing its joyful, warm and indulgent experience to one of India's most vibrant and fast evolving youth markets.

This launch marks Krispy Kreme's entry into Rajasthan and comes at a time when Jaipur is rapidly transforming into a hub for young professionals, students, founders, creators and digitally active consumers. The city is witnessing a rising preference for contemporary global brands, premium café formats and experiential hangout spaces. This shift makes Jaipur a natural choice for Krispy Kreme, whose global café culture and youth led appeal resonate strongly with modern urban consumers seeking quality, comfort and community moments.

To celebrate the launch, Krispy Kreme is introducing a special opening offer: Buy



6 Doughnuts, Get 6 Free. This introductory offer is valid for one week from launch and exclusively for dine in at the World Trade Park store.

Speaking on the launch, Ankit Nagori, Chief Executive Officer, Curefoods, said, "Jaipur is a city known for its warmth, hospitality and love for flavours that bring people together. Every city has its own rhythm, and Jaipur's is one of celebration, colour and community. With this launch, we are excited to become a part of the Pink City's everyday moments, whether it is a shared treat with friends, a sweet break during shopping or thoughtful gifting during festivals and special occasions."

As Krispy Kreme continues to grow across India, entering Jaipur reflects the brand's commitment to expanding into markets where tradition and modernity blend seamlessly, and where consumers embrace food as an essential part of celebration and connection.

DLC Guide - India's First Global Hospitality Rating System

DLC Guide, founded by Jimmy Mistry under the aegis of Della Leaders Club (DLC) concluded successfully at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. It was a grand congregation of restaurateurs, hoteliers, entrepreneurs and industry leaders to commemorate excellence and toast deserving candidates in the respective field.

DLC Guide is an independent global rating system on the lines of Michelin and Forbes Guides. It is majorly known for its non-commercial, fair and bias-free rating system to appraise hospitality establishments. To achieve this unprejudiced rating, Mistry engages an eminent board of experts and industry leaders. Three prime features considered for the awards were calibre, consistency and guest impact. Mistry's passion for establishing a genuine hospitality rating guide is palpable and infectious when he says, "The DLC Guide is rooted in thought leadership and was created to place India firmly on the global hospitality map through a credible, independent benchmarking platform. As a first-generation entrepreneur, my vision has been to build something out of India, for the global citizen, one that drives social and industry impact. The successful Mumbai Second Edition reaffirms the industry's trust in this vision and the growing relevance of India as a global force in experiential hospitality."



The uniqueness of the DLC Guide is its transparency and eschewal of food critics, as Mistry points out, "Food critics tend to be biased as they don't pay. Their verdict cannot be relied upon. We have a distinguished panel of professionals and industry leaders who pay the bills. Their expertise contributes to the integrity and depth of the evaluation process." Every jury member's restaurant rating is displayed online and viewers can access it any time.

The Mumbai Second Edition of the DLC Guide recognised a curated selection of hospitality establishments across distinct categories, reflecting excellence in dining, hospitality and beverage experiences. The restaurant category featured awardees including Masque, The Table, Izumi, Paradox, Akina, Late Checkout, Mizu Izakaya, La Loca Maria, Bandra Born, INKA by Bastian, Comorin, Gaijin, Ziya, Milagro, Dum Phukt each acknowledged for their consistency, culinary innovation and overall guest experience. In the hotel category, Fairmont Mumbai emerged as the sole recipient, recognised for its comprehensive hospitality offering and operational excellence in the luxury space. The bar category saw Sixteen33 receive the award, distinguished for its concept-driven approach and contribution to Mumbai's evolving nightlife and beverage culture.

Building on the momentum of the Mumbai Second Edition, the platform aims to further deepen industry engagement, expand its independent audit network and contribute meaningfully to conversations around global standards, transparency and long-term excellence in hospitality.

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Union Minister Nitin Gadkari Inaugurates Adhira & Appa Cafe in Nagpur

EBG Group, a fast-growing Indian conglomerate announced the expansion of its flagship project Adhira & Appa Cafe Nagpur with the inauguration of a new cafe at Poonam Chambers, Nagpur. Spread across 900 sq. ft., the cafe was inaugurated by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari and with Gurukkal Dr. S. Mahesh graced the occasion as Guest of Honour and offered his blessings.

Built as a cafe centred on good food, good coffee and good conversations, the Nagpur outlet offers a distinctive fusion menu that blends Western flavours with South Indian influences, featuring innovative dishes such as dosa tacos, medu vada waffles and more. All coffee served at Adhira & Appa cafe is crafted using authentic South Indian filter coffee as the base, reinforcing the brand's



commitment to tradition and quality.

Speaking at the inauguration, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said, "Adhira & Appa Cafe reflects a thoughtful blend of tradition and innovation. Initiatives that promote indigenous flavours like authentic South Indian filter coffee, while creating welcoming community spaces, are important for strengthening local entrepreneurship and cultural identity. I wish the team continued success as they expand to more cities across India."

With strong early momentum, EBG Group plans to open over 50 new Adhira & Appa Coffee cafes by March 2026 and scale the brand to 100 outlets across India by December 2026. Over the next five years, the group aims to establish a nationwide presence across major metropolitan and Tier-2 cities.

Salon du Chocolat Makes a Grand India Debut in Mumbai

The world's most iconic chocolate festival made its much-awaited debut in India in January 2026 at the Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai. What unfolded was more than an event, it was a luxurious celebration of chocolate layered with immersive experiences, artistic expression, global flavours and forward-looking inspiration.



One of the most celebrated signatures of Salon du Chocolat worldwide took centre stage on the Mumbai runway, where designers and chocolatiers joined forces to present spectacular garments crafted from tempered chocolate, creations as daring to taste as they were to behold.

Visitors were taken on a global chocolate tasting journey, from silky Swiss milk chocolate and bold Ghanaian dark chocolate to innovative bean-to-bar offerings, single-origin selections and artisanal interpretations.

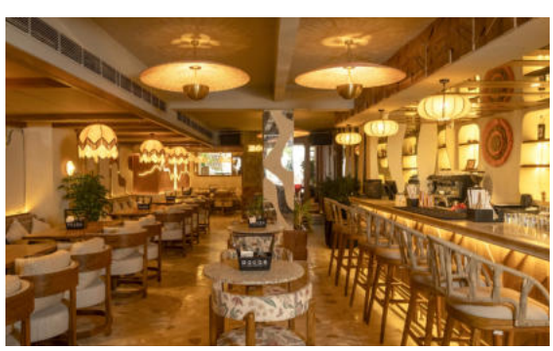
The festival also featured an engaging lineup of hands-on workshops, where attendees learned tempering, truffle-making, ganache techniques and more under the guidance of world-class chocolatiers and pastry chefs.

At the heart of the festival stood a stunning life-size chocolate sculpture made from nearly 200 kg of chocolate. Conceptualised by renowned chocolate artist Rintu Kalyani Rathod, the installation brought together artistic vision and technical mastery in an extraordinary edible form.

Gérald Palacios, Global Head, Salon du Chocolat, shared his enthusiasm for the India debut: "India represents a vibrant and curious audience with a growing appetite for premium experiences. Bringing Salon du Chocolat here is about sharing our global tradition of chocolate artistry while creating something uniquely Indian and truly world-class."

Mocha Café & Bar Opens in New Delhi

Mocha Café & Bar, one of India's longest-standing homegrown café brands, has launched a new outlet in Connaught Place, New Delhi, marking its return to the NCR and the next chapter in its journey of over two decades. Announced in December 2025, the opening



introduces an evolved café-and-bar concept that remains relaxed through the day and transitions into a livelier space by evening, in tune with Connaught Place's all-day, all-occasion energy.

Established in 2001 in Churchgate, Mumbai, Mocha was instrumental in shaping India's early café culture and expanded to Delhi in 2004 with its well-known GK-1 café. Now in its 24th year, the brand continues to define itself as a space centred on comfort, conversation, and community.

The Connaught Place outlet offers an extensive all-day menu featuring breakfast staples like Bun Maska and Chai, Korean Garlic Bun, smoothie bowls, and global-style omelettes, alongside Purani Dilli-inspired dishes, Asian bowls, pastas, pizzas, bao, burgers, momos, paninis, sandwiches and sizzlers.

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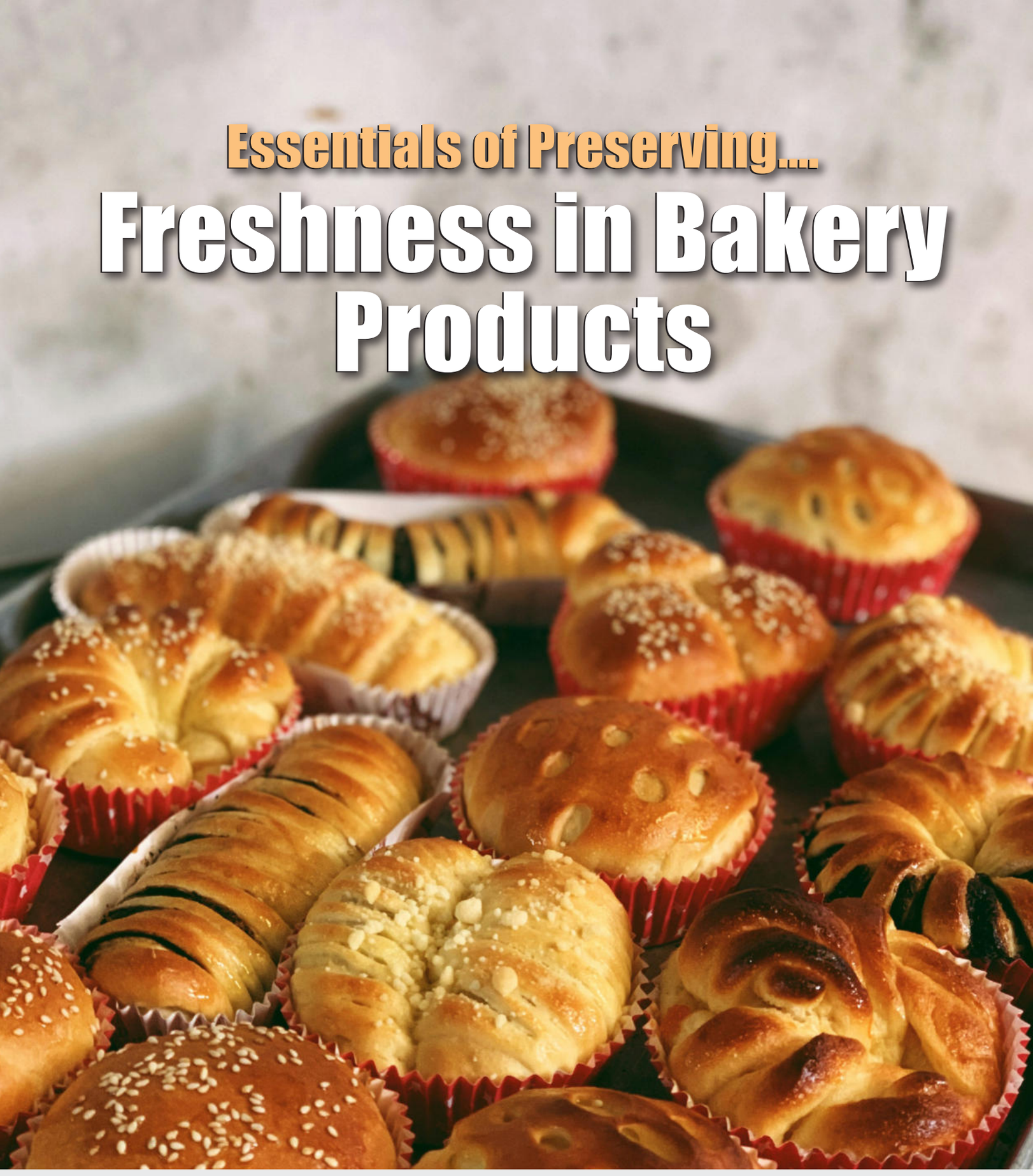
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Essentials of Preserving....

Freshness in Bakery Products



Bakery products form a regular part of a person's diet. Thus, freshness and long shelf life are two aspects which they have to ensure in their products. There are several means of achieving these objectives. Packaging is one form of maintaining a long shelf life and is visually appealing. Proper packaging protects baked goods from dust, moisture and physical damage, maintaining the quality and hygiene that customers expect. Ashok Malkani discusses the health aspects of bakery products, how they can maintain their freshness, et.al.



Bakery products form an integral part of a staple diet across the globe. Historically, bakery products have been a cornerstone of human diet since ages. The first known bakery products were breads. Today, the bakery products market covers a wide range of products like bread, cakes, cookies, biscuits, pastries, pies and other sweet or savoury baked goods. One thing that identifies them is their health aspect.

Today's consumers are health conscious and the bakery industry is considered to produce products like bread and other products using healthy flour. It may be mentioned that the baking industry has long been a major force in forming global healthy culinary cultures, especially in India, where it has enriched communities with a vast array of delightful baked delicacies.

Today's consumers are seeking fresh, high-quality bakery products with a focus on quality. And freshness is an important aspect for this!



Freshness Important for Bakery Industry

Maintaining freshness in the products is one of the most important factors for making the products in-demand items. The top purchase driver of bakery products, according to consumers, is freshness. This is one of the major reasons for the increasing demand of bakery products not only in India but all across the globe.

Anand Ale, Pastry Chef, Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel states. "Freshness is fundamental to bakery products as it directly impacts taste, aroma, texture and visual appeal. At Sheraton Hyderabad, freshness defines quality and reinforces guest trust in our artisanal standards. As a brand that serves a diverse global community, we are committed to consistently offer freshly prepared bakery products that meet international expectations of excellence."

He adds, "Consumers increasingly prefer fresh bakery items as they associate them with better taste, authenticity and health. Freshly baked products also align with the growing demand for minimally processed, chef-crafted foods."

He continues, "Extended freshness reduces wastage, improves operational efficiency and enhances customer satisfaction. For a hotel bakery, it also ensures consistency across service hours without compromising quality. Besides this, fresh bakery products retain better nutritional value, natural moisture and fewer additives. They are easier to digest and provide a cleaner-label experience for health-conscious guests."

Shivani Sharma, Chefpreneur & Founder, Gourmestan affirms, "Freshness in bakery products is a must. The most important reason for having freshness in bakery products is off-the-shelf life. The fresher the bakery product is, the faster the sales would be. Also, the fresher the bakery product is, it will be more palatable and will be tastier for a consumer to consume."

She adds, "As far as frozen bakery products are concerned, I think consumers prefer fresh products over frozen ones. But it depends on which region you are in. I think the most important reason and benefits for a fresh bakery product is the ingredients, and the quality of ingredients which are used. So, when you make a bakery product, the ingredients used are usually dairy and any kind of flour. When you amalgamate a fat with a flour with a proper ingredient, it will always give that kind of a right freshness for any person to be able to buy it off the counter. The moment you see the bakery products sitting on the counter for a little bit longer, the look and the feel of the product becomes very flat. That is the reason why people prefer fresh bakery products."

She continues, "When a fresh product uses good ingredients to maintain freshness, it helps consumers enjoy the product without harming their health. A fresh-smelling product increases their dopamine levels. Of course, when a fresh bakery item gets sold quickly, and if the bakery maintains this standard, they keep loyal consumers. The extended benefits include crispness of the product and umami of the customers."

Yashwant Sopne, Executive Chef at Sayaji Hotel Pune, declares, "Freshness is crucial because it affects taste, texture and consumer satisfaction. Fresh bakery items have better flavour, aroma and softness, which enhance the eating experience."

Speaking about consumers' preference for fresh bakery, he stated, "This is because fresh bakery products have superior taste, better texture. Besides these it may be mentioned that fresh products are healthy and they impart a memorable sensory experience. Benefits of fresh bakery products include higher satisfaction, nutritional quality and reduced spoilage risk."

He adds, "Extended freshness boosts shelf life, reduces waste, increases sales, improves brand reputation and allows better inventory management."

Health Benefits

When baking, the outcome's flavour, texture and appearance greatly depends on the quality and freshness of the ingredients. As an increasing number of people are prioritising their health it is no surprise that the freshness of bakery products is gaining ground.

With consumers unwilling to sacrifice taste for nutrition and opting for healthier and more fresh baked products, which are deemed to be more nutritious and healthy, bakers are ensuring that their products are fresh.

Today, one of the main things that consumers look for in bakery goods is fresh out-of-the-oven experience. But literally

getting a bread or other baked good right out of the oven, unless you bake them yourself, is not possible. If you get the "fresh" part of the equation right, however, you can have products on the shelf that seem like they have come right out of the oven.

One may ask: What health and nutritional advantages does freshness offer to consumers of bakery products?

Anand Ale avers, "Fresh bakery products retain better nutritional value, natural moisture and fewer additives. They are easier to digest and provide a cleaner-label experience for health-conscious guests."

He informs, "The bakery industry is adopting controlled fermentation, temperature-controlled baking cycles and improved storage methods. At Sheraton, precise batch baking and demand-based production play a key role."

Yashwant Sopne states, "Fresh products retain more nutrients, have fewer spoilage microbes and offer better digestibility and flavour, encouraging healthier eating habits."

He adds, "The bakery industry has adopted innovative methods for ensuring freshness in the products. These include modified atmosphere Packaging (MAP), advanced preservative systems, controlled baking processes and smart storage technologies like refrigeration or humidity control."

Shivani Sharma declares, "Fresh bakery products are a very emotional instinct. Anything consumed fresh helps in timely digestion."

She adds, "Better machines are the answer for ensuring freshness in the products over a certain period of time. These days, there are high-range of technologies used in bakeries to ensure the products stay hot. You can have better dough storage too with the right machine. Also, better ingredients are being included in products over commercial ones. These ingredients keep the taste and health intact. Of course, these days, many are collaborating with local stores, bakeries and supermarkets to sell faster and fresher."



Chef Yashwant Sopne

Maintaining Texture

Texture is an important factor for bakery products. One of the most critical aspects of baking is achieving the right texture. This is what gives baked goods their unique character and appeal. It's what makes them feel indulgent, comforting and irresistible. Besides the sensory experience, it plays a crucial role in the structural integrity of the product.

If the texture is not proper, as in a stale slice of bread, a soggy cracker or a muffin that crumbles apart, the consumer is sure to reject the product. According to Daniel Bailey, R&D scientist at Gum Technology Corp., Tucson, AZ, "A product with an undesirable or poor texture can easily deter a consumer from repurchase, even if it has great flavour and colour,"

To help ensure proper texture, ingredients like emulsifiers, enzymes, hydrocolloids and some speciality carbohydrates are used.

To help ensure unobjectionable texture, bakers often include ingredients that are categorised as texturants. These include emulsifiers, enzymes and hydrocolloids, plus some specialty carbohydrates.

Generally speaking, bakers use texturants to extend shelf life. They do this by decreasing staling, improving smoothness and fullness, regulating water activity and moisture migration and improving freeze-thaw resistance in both prebaked and raw frozen dough.

Texturants can also improve microwaveability, decrease glycemic index by reducing carbohydrate content, add fiber, replace eggs or fat and improve texture of gluten-free products. Bill Gilbert, principal food technologist, texturising solutions, Cargill, Minneapolis, has elaborated how it is done. With bread, the right texturant can assist with developing volume and a crispy crust, and this varies by the type of bread – such as white versus whole grain – as well as bread form and shape. He has claimed that with cookies and biscuits, the challenge was to find the right combination of texturants to optimise dough rheology while also delivering desirable and lasting softness or crispiness.

Shivani Sharma explicates, that though different bakery products like bread and other products have different textures, bakers manage to retain them by adopting different methods of baking. To maintain the right texture, she revealed, "Bakers need to have the right ingredients ratio, the right amount of water depending on the product, precise natural sweeteners and fat content if and when needed and the required additives if needed. Then, there is the mixing process and baking, which differ for each product. All of this combined helps to get the different textures, manage them and retain them to the end for baked products."

Yashwant Sopne states, "Bakeries manage texture via precise ingredient ratios, controlled fermentation, specific baking temperatures and packaging that protects moisture and structure."



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Anand Ale disclosed, "Different textures are maintained through accurate formulation, temperature and humidity control and proper timely cooling techniques. Skilled handling and correct storage ensure crisp crusts and soft crumbs are retained."

Packaging

Freshness, which is extremely important for bakery products, can be achieved by air and control methods. They can add 1-3 weeks of freshness to baked products. Proper packaging prevents staling and mold growth while preserving texture. Packaging directly affects how long the baked creations stay fresh. Poor packaging can turn the baker's masterpiece into a disappointment within hours.

Packaging plays multifarious tasks. It attracts the customers while, at the same time, preserving the freshness and quality of the products. Packaging helps protect bakery items from exposure to air, moisture and contaminants, thereby extending their shelf life. It prevents staleness, maintains the desired moisture content and safeguards against physical damage during transportation and storage.

Eye-catching packaging designs can evoke a sense of desire and anticipation, encouraging potential buyers to make a purchase. Packaging serves as a visual representation of the quality, craftsmanship and creativity that goes into creating the baked goods.

Appealing colours, engaging graphics and well-thought-out branding on the packaging can make a bakery product stand out from its competitors.

Well-designed boxes, wrappers and bags leave a lasting impression, encouraging repeat purchases. Effective packaging solutions help maintain the original taste, texture and appearance of baked goods. Ventilated boxes allow air circulation, preventing condensation, while airtight plastic wraps or trays can lock in moisture and aroma. Combining these techniques ensures that bakery products remain soft, flavourful and visually appealing for longer periods.

Sustainability is becoming a major consideration in bakery products' packaging. Consumers are increasingly aware of environmental issues and prefer businesses



Chef Anand Ale

that take steps to reduce waste and use eco-friendly materials.

Recyclable packaging materials offer bakeries an accessible entry point into sustainability while maintaining product freshness across a large variety of offerings. Paper-based options like paperboard boxes, cardboard trays and kraft paper bags provide protection from physical damage and limited moisture barriers while being easy to recycle through existing waste streams.

Glass containers represent another excellent recyclable option for premium bakery items, alongside more sustainable choices like the natural kraft option. Their non-porous surface prevents absorption of flavours or odours, while their ability to be recycled indefinitely makes them truly sustainable. For bakeries selling jams, spreads or liquid products alongside baked goods, glass jars create a premium presentation while offering practically unlimited recyclability.

Recent innovations in recyclable plastics have produced PET (polyethylene terephthalate) and RPET (recycled PET) options that provide excellent moisture barriers while being widely accepted in recycling programs. A 2025 study found that 60% of consumers specifically prefer recyclable packaging that is in stock, making this a strategic choice for bakeries looking to align with customer values.

Anand Ale avers, "Packaging is critical to protect products from moisture loss, contamination and physical damage. It also preserves freshness while enhancing presentation for premium guests. It makes it easier to transport from one place to another without losing its character."

Elaborating on the common types of packaging, he states, "Common packaging includes paper bags, window boxes, food-grade plastic and rigid cartons. These help maintain structure, control airflow and protect delicate bakery items."

As far as eco-friendly packaging is concerned, he acknowledged, "Bakeries are shifting towards biodegradable paper, compostable films and recyclable cartons. At Sheraton Hyderabad, sustainability is balanced with product protection and brand aesthetics."

Speaking about custom packaging, he disclosed, "Custom packaging is designed specifically for a brand's product and guest experience. Key elements include functionality, visual identity, product fit and sustainability."

Yashwant Sopne affirms, "Packaging is essential for protecting products from moisture, oxygen and contamination, thereby extending freshness and maintaining quality."

He adds, "There are several types of packaging materials. These include paper bags (breathable), plastic wraps (moisture barrier), MAP (gas exchange control) and cardboard boxes (physical protection). They protect by preventing moisture loss/gain, oxygen ingress and physical damage. As people become more eco-conscious, eco-friendly options that are being offered are biodegradable films, recycled paper/cardboard, compostable wrappers and reusable containers, reducing environmental impact."

Speaking about custom packaging, he stated, "Custom packaging is tailored design for specific products/brands. Elements include brand alignment, protective functionality, shelf appeal, sustainability and consumer convenience."

Shivani Sharma, elaborating on the importance of packaging says, "Packaging plays a bigger role than one might give it credit for, since the freshness and goodness of the baked product can reach the consumer intact only through packaging. At times, it adds to the appearance since a well-packed baked product has an appeal. Consumers take a look and consider buying the products. There are quite a few types of packaging used by the bakery industry. For example, bread is

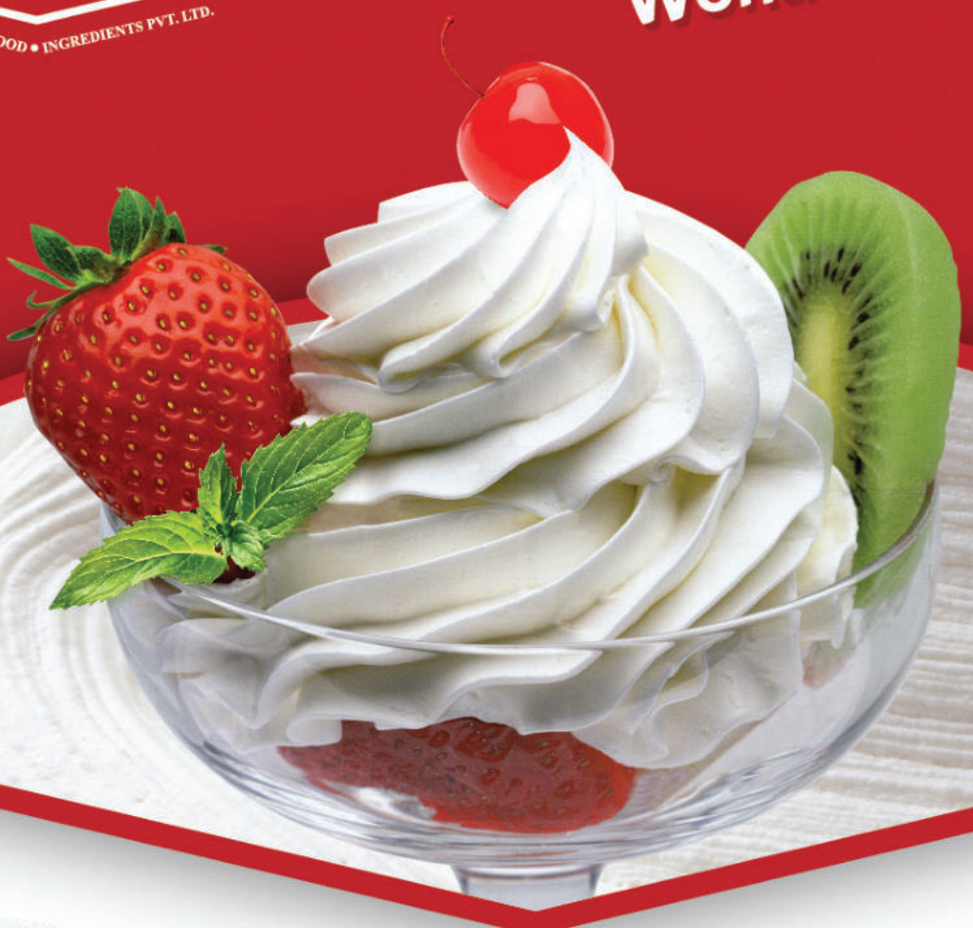
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packed in film packaging and paper if freshly baked in a bakery. Cardboard boxes are used as packaging for cakes, pastries and similar products. Biscuits come in tin, films, and even cardboard, depending on the requirement. Many products like biscuits, cookies and baked snacks come in sealed pouches and bags. All the packaging items help keep the shape, freshness and aroma intact of the baked products."

She disclosed that since people were now becoming eco conscious, "Many packaging items like cardboard boxes, films and pouches now come in recyclable materials, and at times, are made from eco-friendly ingredients like mushrooms and sugarcane fibre. At times, baked products come in a glass jar, which can be reused once the original item is consumed."

When asked about custom packaging, she explained, "Custom packaging is done for brand building and recognition. It can include special material, logos, colours and even inserts like spoons. They also add aesthetic appeal, give a different experience, maintain product freshness and reuse for lasting visibility."

Technologies for Freshness

Ensuring extended shelf life of products is a crucial strategy for maintaining market share and profitability for the bakery industry. Preserving product quality, safety and freshness in the marketplace has become extremely important in the food industry, particularly for bakery products. Besides preservatives, innovative technologies have evolved over time to extend bakery products' shelf life.

Bread and biscuits are two major products of the bakery industry. However, bread loses its freshness during a short storage period. This is a matter of serious concern for the bakery industry. One may mention that there are three aspects to prolong their shelf life. They are : i) Preventing moisture migration from the product by using appropriate packaging; ii) Controlling the formulation and process parameters to minimize the staling rate; and iii) Controlling the conditions for minimal microbial growth.

Some of the technological practices, according to experts, for preserving shelf life can be summed up thus:



Shivani Sharma

Enzyme Technology: It is believed that adding specific enzymes like amylases and xylanases to the dough can extend shelf life. These enzymes, according to experienced bakers, modify the starch and gluten network, slowing down the staling process and helping the bread retain moisture.

Artificial Preservatives: Added during processing of food, they inhibit the growth of microbes like bacteria, yeasts and molds thus extending the shelf life of the products.

Antimicrobial Coatings: These innovative solutions in food technology combat spoilage of the food item. Applied to the surface of food or food packaging, they reduce the presence of bacteria and fungi, leading to an extended shelf-life.

Modified Atmosphere Packaging: This technique alters the gases within the food package. It reduces the amount of oxygen while increasing levels of carbon dioxide and nitrogen.



Smart Packaging: This packaging, which often includes sensors for indicating freshness of the product or detecting the presence of gases emitted by spoiling food, is a leap forward in food storage and safety.

Vacuum Packaging: In this format, air is removed from the package before sealing it. This reduces the presence of oxygen, which is the primary element contributing to spoilage and deterioration of food due to oxidation. Vacuum packaging minimises the risk of spoilage and helps in preserving the texture, flavour and nutritional value of the food.

Anand Ale disclosed, "Technologies such as Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP), blast chilling and temperature-controlled storage are widely used to preserve quality. Precision baking equipment, air tight/vacuum packing, process automation and timely, batch-wise baking further ensures consistent freshness across all bakery offerings."

Yashwant Sopne states, "Some of technologies used for imparting freshness and sustaining it in bakery products include MAP, intelligent packaging (moisture sensors), controlled atmosphere storage and advanced baking software for optimised processes."

Shivani Sharma says, "There are several technological methods being adopted to ensure freshness and extended shelf life of products. There is smart packaging which suggests tips to ensure the freshness remains intact. You have barrier polymers to keep or release moisture, depending on the requirements. Of course, natural preservatives and additives help in the cause. Many times, bakeries prefer keeping their products in nearby areas to maintain freshness and sustainability."

Conclusion

Bakery goods, which have a tendency of evoking memories of days of old, today form an essential part of one's diet. Today, they are preferred because they are considered to be healthier than other food items. This preference for bakery products is expected to continue, due to bakeries adding ingredients to avoid staleness in the products and packaging that is not only visually attractive but also helps in preserving freshness of the product. ■



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Ups & downs in cocoa prices' effect on....

Bakery & Confectionery Industry



As we approach Valentine's Day the thoughts, inevitably, turn to chocolates. These delicacies, popular in several formats across the world, has its own annual celebrative day, World Chocolate Day on July 7, which some suggest, is the anniversary of the introduction of chocolate to Europe in 1550. Chocolate has, over the time, become an important element of bakery and confectionery industry. Today, bakery and confectionery industry is standing at fascinating crossroads where global megatrends, due to the rising cost of cocoa, which is culmination of climate change and shortage of cocoa production, is reshaping these industries to innovate, in order to satisfy consumer choices. Ashok Malkani views the effect of the rising cost of chocolate on the bakery and confectionery industries.

Mention chocolates and you set hearts aflutter and make everyone drool. Love for chocolates have made bakery and confectionery industries introduced this cocoa product into their products by introducing products like chocolate chip cookies, chocolate stuffed biscuits, chocolate cakes and pastries, et al. Using chocolate decorations not only makes the baked goods more attractive but also stand out in the market. Chocolate offers endless creative possibilities, and its rich flavour and elegant appearance makes every baked good, special. Bakeries have started using chocolate in several formats – moulded chocolate (for decorations), chocolate chips, chocolate sprinkles, chocolate pencils or chocolate paint.

However, due to the Pandemic there was a reduction in cocoa production across the globe. This has resulted in a rise in the chocolate prices affecting the bakery and confectionery industries. Mars, Mondelez, Perfetti Van Melle and Hersheys – four of the world's largest confectionery makers – posted their weakest India performance since the pandemic, as price hikes due to surging cocoa prices and strong competition from regional players, impacted sales.

The cocoa crisis began in 2023, which was poor growing season. The period in West Africa was impacted further, in the consecutive growing seasons, the prices, thus rose further through 2024.

It may be mentioned that India is not among the world's largest producers of cocoa (from the cacao trees) and until recently, India had been importing to fulfil around 70% of its cocoa requirements.

Due to shortage of cocoa, the cocoa prices, across the globe have surged since 2024 due to a significant rise in the worldwide demand for cocoa and a decrease in crop production.

Cocoa production challenges, such as adverse weather in major producer countries, continued to create tightness in the market. Supply chain issues, including transportation delays and rising port handling costs have, further, added to the cost of cocoa imports.

Background for Rise in Prices

It has to be realised that around 70% of the world's supply of cocoa comes from the leading cocoa-producing countries of West Africa. However, recently, West Africa faced a cocoa crop failure in Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon – countries that account for a majority of the world's cocoa. Challenges such as ageing trees and disease coupled with erratic rainfall and a heat wave inhibited the growth of cocoa flowers and pods and resulted in a massive shortage of supply and a price increase. Since November 2023, global cocoa prices have been on the rise too from their erstwhile more or less steady price of $2,500 per metric ton to $4,000 per metric ton and then to $10,000 per metric ton in May 2024. Indian cocoa prices showed a corresponding increase from ₹ 25 per kilogram in January 2024 to ₹ 1,000 per kilogram in May 2024.

Poor harvest in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, which are the leading producers of the world's cocoa beans has affected global chocolate industry. The poor harvest is due to El Niño weather conditions, black pod disease and aging cacao trees. This has had an adverse effect on the bakery and confectionery industries.

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such as Valrhona, Callebaut, Van Houten etc are facing the fallout of the war raging in West Asia.

One option is replacing cocoa but it must be realised that replacing or reducing cocoa in over 600 volatile bakery compounds is a challenging and arduous job. The alternatives for replacing cocoa must not only have similar flavours but also process applications. At the same time these ingredients must impart cocoa's colour, aroma, taste and texture profile to the end-product. This requires a deep technical and application expertise.

Several companies have come up with new products for bakery and confectionery industry to meet the challenge of the rising prices of cocoa. Recently, Ardent Mills introduced Cocoa Replace, a wheat-based, clean-label solution to cocoa powder. Kirk Borchardt, senior R&D chef, explaining the need for this product has stated, "We've seen first-hand how challenging the cocoa market has been for our customers, which is why we developed Cocoa Replace as a practical and scalable solution. What really sets the company apart is how our technical services and culinary teams unite with our customers to help them reformulate with Cocoa Replace, ensuring we meet their specific product goals while off-setting the high cost of cocoa powder. Our R&D team is actively collaborating with our customer base to reduce reliance on cocoa powder in their formulations. In one instance, I have been able to reduce



cocoa powder by up to 40 per cent in a chocolate and double chocolate cookie, while delivering the same moist texture and chocolate flavour consumers expect."

The bakery chefs believe that reducing or replacing cocoa in a formulation is complex as cocoa provides different tastes and aroma to the product. They are of the view that there is no universal solution to replacing cocoas in baked products.

Borchardt too agrees to this. He has, therefore, conceded by adding, "Cocoa Replace is part of a broader commitment at Ardent Mills to help customers innovate through market volatility, ensuring their products remain high quality while supporting more resilient supply chains. As the baking industry navigates historic cocoa shortages, having a solution like Cocoa Replace gives customers a lever to pull that doesn't require trade-offs on the sensory qualities that drive repeat purchases."



Confectionery Market

The effect of rising prices have had an adverse effect on the bakery and confectionery industry. Traditionally chocolates and candies have a solid demand in India. They maintain solid sales even during economic slowdowns, serving as affordable indulgences when consumers tighten budgets. However, in 2024 and early 2025, cocoa prices reached record highs forcing manufacturers to increase chocolate prices. This resulted in a decline in sales. Mondelez and Perfetti Van Melle reported a 2% decrease while Mars International managed a modest 2% revenue rise.

Due to increase in prices of cocoa several consumers have downgraded to smaller chocolate packs.

The global chocolate market is, at present experiencing dynamic shifts, driven by evolving consumer preferences, innovation in product development and regional growth factors.

Since the last quarter of 2025 the prices of cocoa have been falling on the softer industrial demand. Cocoa grindings, traditionally seen as a key measure of demand for cocoa, for the second quarter of 2025 declined by -7.2% year-over-

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year in Europe, -16% in Asia and -2.8% in North America. According to Tracey Allen, Agricultural commodities strategist at J.P. Morgan, "The hangover from last year's fourth-quarter highs in cocoa prices has come to roost, and the long-awaited cocoa grind data has confirmed the demand destruction widely reported by the industry in recent months."

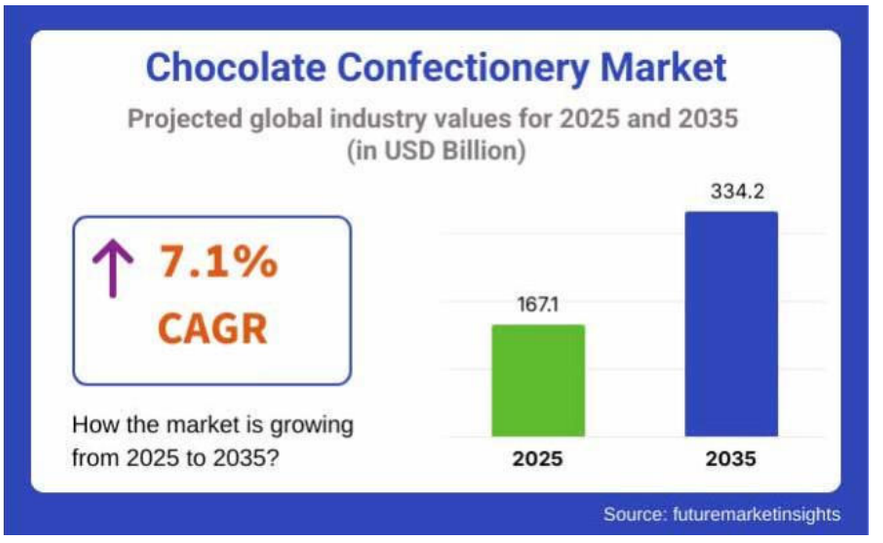
Risks for Chocolate Confectionery Manufacturers

The current increase in cocoa prices due to climatic changes is just one of the risks that an entrepreneur faces in the chocolate confectionery industry. Price volatility in any of the raw materials is one of the significant problems.

Another one is that of the consumers' growing health concern such as obesity and diabetes. The industry could suffer a setback due to the increased fear of these two health issues. There is also a danger that demand for regular chocolate will decrease as consumers shift to healthier alternatives like sugar-free or dark chocolates.

Brands that do not embrace responsible sourcing, ethical working practices, and sustainable packaging may also lose the market to competitors.





Future

According to reports, the prices of cocoa have, since the last quarter of 2025 stabilised and are expected to decrease in 2026 and beyond. The latest report by IMARC Group stresses that the India confectionery market, stimulated by increasing demand for premium quality products, is expected to grow at 4.99% during 2026- 2034. The report adds that one of the key factors impelling the growth of the market in India is the rising popularity of imported chocolates and candies due to the changing consumer eating pattern.

The StrategyHelix Group in its report: India Confectionery Market 2025, states that the market for confectionery is set for moderate growth, with projections indicating an increase of $ 2.9 billion and a CAGR nearing 6.8% over the forecast period (2025). The report further adds, 'The India confectionery market exhibits significant competition. Leading companies within the market include The Procter & Gamble Company (P&G), The Hershey Company, PT. Mayora Indah Tbk, Perfetti Van Melle Group, Parle Products Pvt. Ltd., Nestle S.A., Mondelez International Inc., Mars Incorporated, Mapro Foods Pvt Ltd, Lotte Corporation, ITC Limited, Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited (GCMMF), global Consumer Products (Pvt) Ltd., Ferrero International S.A. and Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group).'

The global chocolate confectionery market is, as per Future Market Insights (FMI), poised to witness 7.1% CAGR from 2025 to 2035, registering USD 334.2 billion by 2035.

Consumer trends in the chocolate confectionery industry are moving towards premium and healthier products.

There have been numerous changes taking place, over the years, in the chocolate confectionery industry.

According to Future Market Insights (FMI), if one divides the changes in two groups – 2020-2024 and 2025-2035 – and compares the changes. (See the table below)

According to the latest report by IMARC Group the rising popularity of imported chocolates and candies due to the changing consumer eating pattern represents one of the key factors impelling the growth of the market in India. The report is of the view that these Ready-to-Eat (RTE) products are offering a favourable market outlook in the country. It states that there is a rise in the demand for nutritious confectionery items among health-conscious consumers in India. This, coupled with the increasing adoption of reduced sugar content, fewer chemical additives and more natural or organic ingredients, is offering lucrative growth opportunities to industry investors. Apart from this, the rising introduction of anti-microbial packaging solutions that maintain quality and prevent product deterioration is supporting the growth

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of the market. Furthermore, key players are introducing premium confectionery products that comprise high-quality nuts, grains and cereals, which is strengthening the growth of the market in India. Looking forward, the market value is projected to reach INR 618.1 Billion by 2034, expanding at a CAGR of 4.99% during 2026-2034.

Indian consumers are increasingly gravitating toward premium and artisanal chocolate products offering superior taste profiles and unique flavour combinations. Growing exposure to international chocolate brands through travel and digital platforms has elevated consumer expectations regarding quality and presentation.

IMARC in its report "India chocolate market size, share, trends and forecast by type, product form, packaging type, distribution channel and region, 2026-2034" discloses that in July 2025 Manam Chocolate's boutique café and retail store in New Delhi showcased its bean-to-bar process and reported a 125% year-on-year growth, highlighting how experiential and craft chocolate brands are resonating with discerning buyers. Bean-to-bar chocolate makers and boutique chocolatiers are gaining prominence in metropolitan cities, catering to discerning consumers seeking ethically sourced and handcrafted products with sophisticated packaging.

Subash Balar, Business Head – Confectionery, Chocolates & Coffee at ITC, believes that India's chocolate market is today valued around ₹ 20, 000 crore. The premium and luxury segment which is today estimated at ₹ 100 crore is, according to him, growing at 15–20% annually, far outpacing the broader category's 5–6% growth. India's premium chocolate segment is evolving rapidly, driven by rising disposable incomes and greater exposure to fine chocolates abroad. ITC Foods' artisanal brand, Fabelle, is witnessing strong momentum, recording a 25–30 per cent year-on-year growth and preparing to double its production capacity by next year.

Conclusion

The Bakery and confectionery industry has suffered due to the increasing cost of cocoa during 2023 to 2025. This was mainly due to unfavourable weather conditions which resulted in several cocoa trees dying. However, during the last quarter of 2025, the conditions rectified to a little extent. Several changes took place during this period in the chocolate confectionery industry. However, it is believed that the future is bright.

Everyone in the industry is keeping their fingers crossed! ■

2020 to 2024	2025 to 2035
Shoppers increasingly seek low-sugar, dark chocolates. They have fewer calories and more antioxidants, addressing the increasing consciousness for health and well-being.	Further emphasis on low-sugar and dark chocolates but a very sharp rise in demand for plant-based, dairy-free chocolates. They are preferred by those who have lactose intolerance, vegans or moral consumers
An increase in demand for upscale, artisanal and gourmet chocolate items. Customers started appreciating the quality and distinctiveness of the chocolate they buy, choosing expert products.	Premium chocolates will diversify even further, with a focus on ethically obtained ingredients like Fair Trade cocoa, organic approvals and distinctive, high-end chocolate experiences.
Higher sales of chocolates online as consumers shifted to e-commerce for convenience, particularly amid the pandemic. Businesses invested in e-commerce platforms, providing quicker deliveries and web-exclusive products.	E-commerce will remain dominant, with chocolate brands improving online purchasing experience through personalised suggestions, subscription services and limited-edition products.
Responsible sourcing of cocoa and other materials was also a central focus, with brands advertising Fair Trade and Rainforest Alliance certifications as a way to appeal to sustainable-conscious consumers.	Increased emphasis on sustainable packaging, carbon-neutral production and green practices. Consumers will insist on transparency in sourcing, such as minimising environmental footprints and social responsibility.
Meaningful expansion of experimental and novel chocolate flavours, such as international flavours and mixing with fruits, spices and herbs, providing a richer taste experience.	Flavour innovation will proceed, with brands venturing into new, exotic and regional flavours, such as the addition of superfoods, adaptogens and functional ingredients like CBD, collagen or probiotics.
Increase in the popularity of vegan and dairy-free chocolates, targeting lactose-intolerant consumers and vegans.	Vegan and plant-based chocolates will go mainstream, no longer a niche category. Brands will continue to innovate with plant-based versions of milk chocolate, appealing to a wider audience.
As consumers took a greater interest in high-end products, there was increased emphasis on providing distinctive eating experiences through artisanal chocolates, specialty packaging and gift-giving.	The experience-based trend will gain greater popularity, with chocolates positioned as lifestyle items. Customised gifting items, limited-series flavours and experience chocolates (e.g., chocolate tasting sets) will gain momentum.

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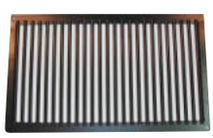

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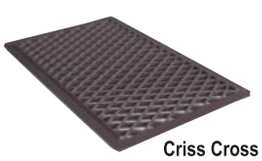

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2026 Valentine's Day Bakery Trends and Insights

By Sharmila Chand

Consumer preferences for Valentine's Day are shifting, driven by a blend of nostalgia, sustainability, health consciousness and a desire for unique experiences.

Personalised, miniature portions with specific customised designs and intricate embellishments characterise the evolving trends in Valentine's Day Bakery industry. There is a clear focus on experiential treats with unique flavours like exotic florals, savoury-sweet, bitter spicy reflecting innovative fusion narrative.

Here we speak to four chefs who share their thoughts about how Valentine's Day Bakery scenario has evolved over a period of time.

"Valentine's Day 2026 marks a shift from mass to meaningful gifting, where products are crafted with love, conscience, personal storytelling and an unmistakable Instagram-friendly appeal."

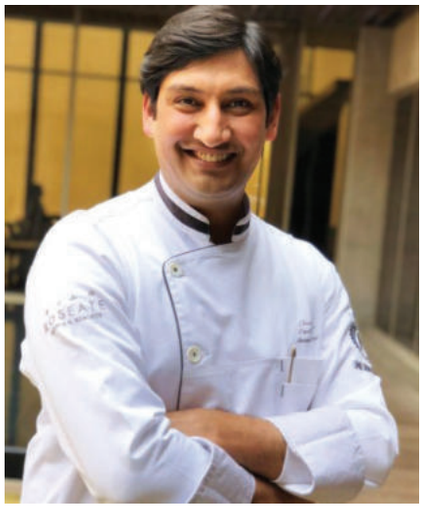
Chef Anand Panwar, Executive Pastry Chef, Roseate Hotels and Resorts

Key Trends

Couples today value experiences, aesthetics and Instagram-worthy moments. Products that look beautiful, feel special and create memorable experiences naturally attract more attention and drive higher engagement.

Heart-shaped cakes, bento cakes and pull-me-up cakes receive the most attention. These designs feel personal, thoughtful and visually appealing, perfect for gifting and sharing on social media.

Valentine's gifting is emotional rather than price-driven. Artisanal, handmade chocolates with elegant packaging are favourites, as they convey care, effort and exclusivity.



Dessert jars continue to be trendy due to their aesthetic appeal, convenience, and variety of flavours. They are popular for both gifting and individual indulgence.

Limited-edition beverages such as rose latte, strawberry cocoa and matcha-based drinks add excitement and seasonal charm to Valentine's menus.

Favourite Flavours

When it comes to flavour preferences, customers are increasingly gravitating toward premium and sophisticated profiles. Dark chocolate remains a top favourite, valued for its rich taste, balanced bitterness and indulgent feel. Pistachio continues to gain popularity as a premium flavour, associated with luxury, subtle sweetness and a refined palate. Salted caramel maintains strong demand due to its perfect balance of sweet and salty, making it both comforting and indulgent. Alongside these established favourites, hazelnut and Lotus Biscoff are emerging as strong trends. Hazelnut appeals for its nutty richness and familiarity, especially when paired with chocolate, while Lotus Biscoff stands out for its caramelised,

spiced flavour that feels indulgent and modern, making it especially popular with younger, trend-driven consumers. At Roseate, we also reflect these preferences through thoughtfully curated flavour selections that align with our guests' evolving tastes and expectations of refined indulgence.

Beyond Heart Shaped Chocolates

Heart shapes are no longer just symbolic; they have become a true expression of love and emotion. This shift is also reflected in flavour choices, where bright, expressive profiles are gaining attention. Passion fruit and mango bring a fresh, tropical vibrancy that feels playful and exciting. Raspberry adds a bold, slightly tart note that is both romantic and visually striking. Red rose and gulkand introduce a soft, floral sweetness rooted in tradition, evoking nostalgia while still feeling premium and thoughtful. Together, these flavours enhance the emotional connection, making the overall experience feel more personal, memorable and celebration-worthy.

Chocolate Truffles Capture the Essence of Valentine's Gifting

Their well-loved name and rich, luxurious mouthfeel make them feel indulgent and special, making them an ideal choice for meaningful and elegant gifts.

AI-powered Flavour Profiling

This is a future-defining trend, especially for premium retail brands. AI helps decode customer taste preferences, including sweetness levels and bitterness tolerance, allowing brands to create more personalised assortments for couples. However, in the Indian market, guided customisation supported by AI is likely to scale faster than fully automated systems, as customers still value human interaction and expert recommendations alongside technology.

Sustainability and Health Quotient

This is no longer an option; it has become an integral part of the brand journey at Roseate Hotels & Resorts. With the growing emphasis on Vocal for Local and Make in India, guests are increasingly conscious about what they consume and where it comes from. They actively seek ethically sourced cocoa, lower sugar content, higher dark chocolate percentages, no artificial colours and eco-friendly packaging.

In response, Roseate Hotels & Resorts offers 70% dark chocolate truffles with low sugar, jaggery chikki chocolates and tulsi honey–based creations that align with these values. Sustainability today goes beyond goodwill, it builds guest trust and directly drives repeat engagement and loyalty.

'Exotic Botanical Infusions' are a Niche Trend

Customers are increasingly open to experimenting with refined flavour pairings such as rose with dark chocolate, saffron with milk chocolate, lavender with honey caramel and orange blossom with cardamom paired with dark chocolate.

Our offerings follow a similar philosophy and are well loved by our clientele, with



flavours like gulkand, shahi elaichi, eternal summer, lavender and matcha. The key to success with such profiles is restraint–flavours must remain balanced and subtle, as Indian consumers generally prefer elegance over overpowering floral notes.

"We are seeing guests looking for limited-edition flavour journeys."

Chef Baishnab Charan Mallick, Bakery Chef, Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa, Goa



Key Trends for Valentine's Day

Customers are increasingly seeking uniquely tailored products, not just generic items.

For us this means Custom messages & photos on cakes. Personalised flavours or ingredient choices (e.g., "his & hers" twin cakes). Interactive design options online – letting buyers preview designs. This hugely matters as consumers want gifts that feel personal, not mass-produced.

Flavours have Evolved

As far as I see Tart & Fruity flavours are in demand. A few specific ones being Raspberry & Strawberry because of their vibrant colour and refreshing balance to sweetness. Expect exotic yet elegant experiences citrus plus berry, pistachio nut richness, floral botanicals and elevated comfort flavours.

Trend is Beyond Heart-Shaped Chocolates

While heart-shaped chocolates are iconic, there is a growing segment of consumers seeking subtler, more design-led expressions of romance. For them, love is communicated through craft, flavour complexity and storytelling, rather than overt symbolism. We are seeing guests looking for limited-edition flavour journeys. For Valentine's Day, we cater to this preference with curated chocolate boxes–featuring asymmetric bonbons, layered textures, unexpected pairings like chilli-orange or yuzu-dark chocolate, and refined packaging. These offerings appeal to discerning buyers who value sophistication over symbolism and see chocolate not just as a gift, but as an experience.

Chocolate Truffles have an Artisanal Appeal

Chocolate truffles are highly trendy as they represent luxury, indulgence and craftsmanship in a way that resonates deeply with Valentine's Day consumers. Chocolate Truffles offer complex flavour profile as well as textural luxury giving it an artisanal appeal. For today's buyers, especially Millennials and Gen Z, truffles are moments of pleasure and discovery. They photograph well, pair beautifully with wine or dessert courses, and are perfect for gifting in elegant boxes. So yes: truffles are both trendy and commercially compelling for Valentine's Day.

AI-powered Flavour Profiling is Revolutionising Personalisation

AI-powered flavour profiling is a natural evolution in the confectionery space and aligns perfectly with modern Valentine's Day gifting. By analysing taste preference such as sweetness levels, cocoa intensity, flavour affinities and even mood-based choices AI enables couples to co-create bespoke chocolate assortments that feels personal. This technology enhances emotional relevance, reduces gifting anxiety ("Will they like this?"), and allows to offer hyper-customised experiences at scale. For Valentine's Day, where thoughtfulness matters as much as indulgence, AI becomes a silent curator transforming chocolates from a generic gift into an intimate expression of understanding and care.

Sustainability and Health are Significant Decisive Factors

At Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa, we believe that every creation reflects respect for the environment and wellbeing of our guests. For today's discerning traveller, they choose with purpose. That's why our Valentine's Day confectionery is crafted using ethically sourced chocolate and seasonal fruits harvested from sustainable farms across Goa and nearby regions.

To name a few, Dark chocolate-raspberry truffles made with fair-trade couverture and beet sugar (lower glycemic impact), Whole-grain almond oat financiers sweetened with organic honey or jaggery, cacao nibs and rose pralines in biodegradable, plant-based wrappers, raw cacao and tropical fruit bonbons featuring sustainably farmed ingredients.

We've also shifted our packaging to compostable boxes and recycled ribbons, and every ingredient is transparently traced back to its source.

"Valentine's Day is about love – and for us, that extends to the planet and the wellbeing of the people who grow our ingredients," adds Anthony Dsouza – Area Materials Manager – IHCL Goa.

'Exotic Botanical Infusions' is an Evolved Trend

"Exotic botanical infusions resonate strongly with us because they echo Goa's natural abundance and India's long relationship with flowers, spices, and aromatics. At Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa, we approach these flavours with restraint–allowing botanicals to enhance, not overpower, the chocolate.

For Valentine's Day, our offerings include Rose–Saffron Dark Chocolate Truffles, where Kashmiri saffron and rose distillate lend warmth and depth to ethically sourced dark couverture, Orange Blossom & Goan Honey Caramels, soft-set and delicately perfumed, celebrating floral sweetness, Chamomile–White Chocolate Bonbons, light and calming, designed for guests who prefer a gentler indulgence.

'Story telling is the name of the game - Narrative Packaging and Storytelling that elevates the gift beyond taste."

Nanda Kishor, Bakery Chef, The Yellow House, IHCL SeleQtions Goa

Key Trends

Consumers are moving away from

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BrightGene	L- Glutathione Alpha Lipoic Acid	Nutraceuticals
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mass-market chocolates and are making space for premium, small-batch, handcrafted confectionery. Most popular ones are Bean-to-Bar chocolates, Exotic flavour infusions (saffron, rose, chili, citrus), Artisanal truffles & bonbons. From the consumer perspective, gifting is becoming experience-driven and quality over quantity.

Favourite Flavours

We are seeing a preference for Yuzu & Raspberry / Exotic Citrus which is a fresh, tangy flavours paired with berry notes are appearing in macarons, patisserie and chocolates. Also a demand for Botanical & Floral Notes (rose, lavender, hibiscus) increasingly used in premium chocolates and desserts for elegant aromatics.

Heart-shaped Chocolates

As heart-shaped chocolates are instantly recognisable symbols of love, requiring no explanation, which makes them ideal for Valentine's gifting. The demand is for elevated heart-shaped chocolates–crafted with single-origin cocoa, artisanal fillings and refined finishes such as hand-brushed cocoa butter, gold leaf accents, or jewel-toned glazes. For Valentine's Day, we offer heart-shaped pralines, truffles and bonbons filled with flavours like raspberry-dark chocolate, rose-pistachio, salted caramel and champagne ganache where the familiar form meets modern luxury. These chocolates photograph beautifully and emotionally resonate, making them a commercial and sentimental favourite.

Chocolate Truffles are Trendy as Always

While truffles remain a beloved classic, however I feel trendiness isn't about novelty but about reinvention. Truffles have always been part of Valentine's gifting, but what's evolving is how they are interpreted. Simply offering traditional chocolate truffles is no longer enough; consumers now want Innovative infusions with unexpected savory twists. Another aspect is this being Dietary inclusivity - vegan, low-sugar or plant-based truffle options. Story telling is the name of the game - Narrative packaging and storytelling that elevates the gift beyond taste. Truffles must be reimagined to stay relevant. The excitement comes from flavor experimentation limited-edition collections and experiential elements like pairing suggestions or tasting notes rather than from the form itself.

AI-powered Flavour Profiling is Revolutionising Personalisation

While AI-driven flavour profiling is impressive, Valentine's Day gifting thrives on human intuition, surprise and serendipity elements that algorithms cannot fully replicate. Chocolate is emotional and experiential, shaped by memory, craftsmanship and sensory discovery rather than data points. Over-reliance on AI risks turning a romantic gesture into a transactional exercise, where spontaneity gives way to optimisation. Many consumers still value the chocolatier's expertise, the joy of exploring unexpected flavours and the romance of being surprised.

Sustainability and Health are Significant Decisive Factors

"At The Yellow House, sustainability and wellbeing are part of our brand creative identity. Our Valentine's Day chocolate offerings marry conscience with craft, focusing on flavour experiences that are as kind to the body as they are to the earth. Our most coveted products as such are Goa botanica truffle collection featuring rose, hibiscus, mokha and lemon basil, all crafted with fair-trade chocolate and low-GI coconut palm sugar. Plant-based ruby-cocoa bonbons with local cashew cream and wild berry coulis which are entirely vegan and allergen-friendly. Citrus-infused dark chocolate hearts wrapped in seed-embedded biodegradable paper that guests can later plant at home. We also champion zero-waste dessert plating, edible garnishes, and refillable packaging for our signature Valentine's dessert boxes. At The Yellow House, sustainability isn't an add-on – it's a sensory philosophy that enhances every bite of romance."

Exotic Botanical Infusions

At The Yellow House For Valentine's Day, botanicals allow us to craft chocolates layering aroma, texture and flavour. Our signature offerings include Lavender–Wild Honey Caramels, slow-cooked and paired with 70% dark chocolate for a refined floral finish. Rose, Hibiscus & Ruby Cocoa Truffles, vibrant in both colour and taste, inspired by garden blooms and modern patisserie. Lemon Verbena & White Chocolate Hearts, fresh, aromatic and wrapped in biodegradable, seed-infused paper.

"Valentine's Day trend in 2026 is less about extravagance and more about intentional indulgence."

Chef Bhaskar Chakraborty, Executive Pastry Chef, JW Marriott Kolkata



Key Valentine's Day Trends

Valentine's Day cakes in 2026 are becoming more refined and storytelling-driven. Consumers are moving away from overly sweet, heavy cakes to lighter textures, elegant finishes and meaningful designs. Bento cakes, mini celebration cakes for couples, and sculpted heart-

shaped entremets are in high demand. There is also a clear shift towards customisation–personal messages, flavour pairing choices and minimalistic luxury aesthetics.

The confectionery segment is seeing strong growth in handcrafted, artisanal chocolates. Customers value quality over quantity, preferring curated assortments with distinct flavour profiles. Textural contrast–crunchy pralines, soft caramels and silky ganache–is a key demand. Limited-edition Valentine collections with premium ingredients are especially popular.

Valentine-themed desserts such as macarons, dessert jars, éclairs and petit fours are gaining popularity as gifting alternatives. Consumers appreciate variety packs that allow indulgence without excess. Visually striking yet portion-controlled desserts resonate strongly with modern buyers.

Favourite Flavours

Flavour preferences balance comfort and sophistication.

Top favourites include:

Dark chocolate with raspberry or cherry, Hazelnut praline,

Vanilla bean with berry compote; Coffee and caramel.

There is also a growing appreciation for subtle acidity and floral undertones, which enhance flavour depth without overpowering sweetness.

Chocolate Truffles Remain Timeless

Chocolate truffles are increasingly popular due to their luxurious mouthfeel and versatility. Consumers appreciate truffles infused with modern flavours and premium couverture chocolate.

Flavoured truffles with fruit reductions, spice notes and layered textures are particularly well received, making them a staple in Valentine's collections.

Exotic Botanical Infusions

Exotic botanical flavours are gaining traction among discerning customers seeking something unique. Floral and spice-infused chocolates bring refinement and elegance to Valentine offerings.

Rose and raspberry dark chocolate truffles are very popular and so are Saffron-infused white chocolate ganache. ■

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The Slow Alchemy of Caramel

By Harsha Masand

In a contemporary bakery and café ecosystem increasingly shaped by speed, visual spectacle and social-media-first consumption, caramel occupies a paradoxical yet powerful position. It is neither new nor performative. It does not rely on novelty plating, colour theatrics or fleeting trends. And yet, across cafés, premium casual dining, cloud kitchens and patisserie formats, caramel continues to outperform trend-driven flavours in repeat consumption, menu adaptability and emotional recall. Its relevance is not aesthetic; it is structural.

Caramel endures because it aligns craft with commerce and emotion with economics. At a time when menus are being rationalised, ingredient costs are under pressure and diners are becoming more selective about indulgence, caramel functions as a low-risk, high-return flavour system. It delivers depth without excess, indulgence without fatigue and memory without noise. This makes it uniquely positioned for the present food landscape, where longevity matters more than momentary attention.

Why Caramel Feels Intimate on the Palate?

From a sensory science perspective, caramel's intimacy lies in balance rather than intensity. Unlike flavours driven by sharp acidity, aggressive sweetness or high cacao bitterness, caramel operates within a narrow but nuanced spectrum sweetness tempered by bitterness, warmth layered with light smokiness and fat-driven roundness that softens the finish. This controlled flavour band allows caramel to feel familiar without being simplistic and indulgent without being overwhelming.

Chef Ashish Singh, COO and Culinary Director at Café Delhi Heights, explains, "Caramel is strongly associated with comfort and nostalgia, often reminding diners of home-style desserts or shared moments. This translates into diners slowing down, engaging more emotionally with the dish and responding with a sense of ease and personal attachment rather than just appreciation of technique."

Flavour psychology supports this response. Aromatic compounds formed during caramelisation overlap with those found in toasted grains, dairy fats and cooked sugars smell memories deeply embedded across cultures. This explains why caramel does not need visual reinforcement. It performs internally, engaging emotional memory rather than sensory shock.

For operators, this intimacy translates into behavioural outcomes slower consumption, higher satisfaction and stronger repeat ordering. In menu design,

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Chef Daugdo Farokh Regina

caramel works particularly well as a closing flavour such as custards, flans, tres leches and cheesecakes where the objective is not excitement, but emotional resolution. This sensory intimacy naturally feeds into caramel's psychological role as an indulgence anchor.

The Psychology of Indulgence and Caramel's Emotional Pull

Once caramel establishes emotional safety on the palate, it lowers the cognitive barrier to indulgence. Diners are no longer evaluating complexity or novelty; they are experiencing reassurance. This positions caramel as what behavioural economists would describe as a low-risk indulgence flavour diners are comfortable returning to repeatedly.



Chef-owner Parth Gupta of Cicchetti Italiano, Bloom Cafe & Cakery, and Firenze Gelateria & Caffè articulates this durability: "Caramel is timeless because it is foundational rather than fashionable. It's built on technique, patience and transformation rather than novelty."

From a industry standpoint, this foundational quality is critical. Across café chains and dessert-focused menus, caramel-led SKUs salted caramel brownies, caramel lattes, caramel custards consistently show higher reorder rates than trend-forward flavours. Familiarity reduces decision fatigue, particularly in uncertain economic climates where diners gravitate toward emotionally safe choices.

Caramel also performs as a generational bridge. Younger consumers associate it with café beverages and confectionery, while older diners link it to puddings, flans and home-style desserts. This demographic neutrality gives caramel a wider addressable market than many contemporary flavours, strengthening its long-term menu viability.

Why Caramel Demands Skill to Craft Well?

Despite its comforting perception, caramel remains one of the most technically unforgiving components in professional pastry. Sugar caramelises rapidly beyond 177°C, leaving a narrow margin between complexity and bitterness. Unlike chocolate–which allows for tempering curves and batch consistency caramel requires continuous sensory engagement.

Chef Bilkis Khan captures this precision: "Caramel is sensitive and impeccable. It offers sweetness, bitterness, warmth and depth to the perfect tones of balance."

From an operational standpoint, this sensitivity has consequences. Caramel is difficult to fully standardise without compromising flavour. As a result, many large-format bakeries centralise base caramel production while finishing or adjusting it in-store to preserve freshness and depth. This hybrid approach balances labour efficiency with flavour integrity.

Caramel's multiple expressions–sauce, soft chew, brittle, salted variants, dulce de leche also demand technical differentiation



Chef Ashish Singh

in temperature control, fat ratios and cooling protocols. In professional kitchens, caramel often functions as a benchmark skill because it tests patience, restraint and timing qualities that cannot be automated. This craft barrier is precisely what elevates caramel from a comfort flavour to a mark of culinary discipline.

Caramel vs Chocolate: Romance Without the Visual Noise

Chocolate has long dominated romantic menus, but its saturation has led to sensory fatigue. Premium chocolate sourcing is volatile, global pricing is unstable and visual overuse has diluted emotional impact. Caramel, by contrast, offers a quieter, more mature form of indulgence.

Chef Daugdo Farokh Regina of Farzeen's Kitchen notes, "Caramel is a more grown-up choice than chocolate on romantic menus because it has a subtle complexity that slowly unfolds, creating a sense of quiet intimacy."

Adding to a menu-engineering perspective, caramel enables indulgence without visual excess. It integrates seamlessly with neutral bases custards, creams, baked sponges allowing plating restraint while maintaining emotional richness. This aligns with modern premium casual and fine-dining formats, where understated luxury carries more value than spectacle.

Commercially, caramel also offers cost stability. Sugar and dairy inputs are more



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AQU0C3	BN Dark Red Plum Puree	1 kg
AKA0C6	BN Kalamansi Puree	1 kg
ACI0C6	BN Yellow Lemon Puree	1 kg
APS0C3	BN Watermelon Puree	1 kg
ACE0C6	BN Black Cherry Puree	1 kg
AAC0C3	BN Acai Puree	1 kg
ACO0C6	BN Coconut Cream	1 kg
APV0C6	BN Green Apple Puree	1 kg
AMR1C3	BN Chestnut Vanilla Puree	1 kg
APB0C6	BN White Peach Puree	1 kg
APA0C6	BN Yellow Passion Fruit Puree	1 kg
AGT0C6	BN Morello Cherry Puree	1 kg
AMY0C6	BN Wild Blueberry Puree	1 kg

Code	Product Name	Packaing
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AAB0C6	BN Apricot Puree	1 kg
AGO0C6	BN Pink Guava Puree	1 kg
AMU0C6	BN Blackberry Puree	1 kg
AMA0C6	BN Mandarin Orange Puree	1 kg
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AAN0C6	BN Pineapple Puree	1 kg
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Chef Ashwin Singh

predictable than imported coverture, and perceived indulgence often exceeds actual food cost. This positions caramel-led desserts with strong contribution margins, especially in tasting menus, prix fixe formats and seasonal offerings.

Pricing, Pairings and the Indian Caramel Advantage

From a cost-to-perception standpoint, caramel is one of the most efficient flavour builders on a menu. It relies on relatively stable pantry inputs including sugar, dairy, butter yet carries a strong premium perception due to its association with craft and patience.

Chef Ashwin Singh, Creative Culinary Head at Aspect Hospitality, explains, "For a lot of Indians caramel is something exotic, so they just go by the name that is what makes caramel smart for menus." The terminology itself enables pricing elasticity, allowing brands to command higher price points without proportionally increasing food cost.

Caramel also scales efficiently across formats. A single base caramel can be adapted into sauces, glazes, fillings and beverage inclusions, reducing SKU complexity while improving inventory utilisation. This versatility is particularly valuable for cafés and cloud kitchens seeking margin optimisation.

Pairings further amplify caramel's economic value. Salt sharpens sweetness and extends finish, coffee deepens bitterness and sophistication, nuts add texture and perceived richness and fruit introduces acidity and lightness. These pairings allow chefs to recalibrate flavour profiles without reformulating core recipes.

In the Indian context, jaggery and palm sugar expand caramel's narrative even further. These sweeteners introduce mineral depth and smokiness, aligning caramel with indigenous food memory–boiling milk, sugarcane fields and winter kitchens. When paired with spices such as cardamom, ginger or black pepper, caramel shifts from dessert to dialogue, offering localisation without losing premium appeal.



Why Some Flavours Make Moments, but Caramel Makes Memories?

Caramel's endurance lies in its finish. Warm flavours linger longer in memory than sharp or acidic ones. They do not conclude abruptly; they settle.

Chef Ashish Singh reflects, "Caramel connects more with memory because its flavour is rooted in familiarity and lived experiences." Across cultures, caramel appears in different forms of crème caramel, jaggery puddings, toffees–but the emotional response remains consistent. It softens conversation, anchors celebration and invites return.

For industry veterans, caramel's strength lies in its refusal to perform. It does not chase trends. It adapts quietly, across formats, seasons and generations. In a business increasingly driven by speed and spectacle, this quiet reliability is not a weakness, it is a strategic asset.

Caramel, shaped slowly by heat and patience, reminds the industry that the most enduring flavours are not those that demand attention, but those that stay long after the plate is cleared. And in an era where loyalty is harder to earn than visibility, caramel's ability to convert moments into memories may be its most valuable commercial trait. ■



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Pastry Fillings: Where Craft Meets Innovation

By Nikita Madan

The silky custards, bright fruit jams, rich ganache and nutty pastes, pastry fillings have always been the soul of cakes, tarts and flaky viennoiserie. Pastry fillings have evolved from rudimentary fillings like honey, nuts, dates used in ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian times. They progressed through spiced meat, fruit tarts and savory pies in the medieval period to fruit preserves, custards, and almond pastes of the Victorian era, modern pastry fillings are highly varied and continue to evolve with every passing year.

Classics like vanilla pastry cream, berry compote, chocolate mousse and cream cheese spreads are still everywhere today. But the world of pastry fillings keeps evolving. The chefs are pushing boundaries with each new creation, swapping in airy whipped creams, freeze-dried fruit, nut butters, cheese-based fillings, chocolate & mousse and crunchy fillings. You'll find European custards right next to mango curds, pistachio or gianduja creams or even almond or cashew butters. Jam isn't just strawberry or apricot anymore, either. The innovations in jams have reached new heights with new flavours with a global palate like tamarind, apple thyme, fig rosemary red wine, pumpkin, rose petal preserves and many more exotic flavours. Even fruit leather is not behind, the chewy texture of the fruit leather makes for an interesting filling option. And let's not forget the healthy fillings like kombucha glaze or protein-packed fillings, which have taken the world by storm.

Texture Now Defines the Pastry Experience

Texture is a very big part of this evolution. Bakers are obsessed with mixing things up, be it creamy, crunchy, chewy and airy, all in one bite. Praline bits, cacao nibs, brittle shards, puffed rice, honeycomb, or even kunafa might hide inside a filling. Aerated fillings are also a trend with light mousses and foams that deliver strong flavours without the heaviness of traditional creams. Chandan Singh, Executive Pastry Chef, The Suryaa New Delhi, says, "Texture is just as important as flavour when I design a filling, sometimes even more so. A filling can taste incredible, but if the texture is off, the entire pastry suffers. I always aim for contrast, smooth against flaky, creamy, balanced with smooth and mouth-

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"Food science helps me create fillings that are stable, smooth, and reliable."

Chandan Singh Negi, Executive Pastry Chef, The Suryaa New Delhi

melting. Texture affects how flavours are released and how satisfying each bite feels."

Global flavours have changed the texture game too, Japanese and Korean influences have brought in mochi, a chewy rice cake that is now showing up inside the pastries or even as a topping. Some bakers use shokupan crumbs for a crispy, light crunch. Middle-Eastern's baklava and kunafa adds another layer of inspiration with its sweet, buttery, crackling texture.

Mukesh Rawat, PAN India Chef, 2m cocoa states, "Flavour creates the first impression, but texture defines the experience. A filling must feel right on the palate, whether it's silky, airy, crisp or fluid, because texture influences how flavours are perceived and remembered. In pastry, texture brings contrast and harmony, complementing the structure of the dessert."

According to Sushil Setia, Founder, School of Bakery & Culinary Art, " A filling can taste amazing, but if it feels grainy, sticky or heavy, the experience falls flat. Creaminess, crunch, or melt matter a lot in how premium a pastry feels. I always think about how it should feel in the mouth before locking the flavour."

The Plant-Based Shift

Right now, one of the biggest shakeups in pastry is all about plant-based and clean label fillings. People want more vegan and allergen-free choices, so bakers are swapping out eggs, dairy and artificial additives for plant-based ingredients. Vegan pastry creams, for example, use coconut, almond, soy or oat milk, thickened up with starches or gums instead of traditional milk or egg yolks. If you need something to stand in for egg whites, like in a mousse or meringue, aquafaba (the liquid from the boiled chickpeas) or chia/flax gel does the trick.

Although using vegan replacements is tricky, Chef Chandan agrees, "Developing plant-based or vegan pastry fillings is challenging because it's hard to match the richness, smooth texture and stability of dairy-based fillings. Vegan alternatives may cause separation, graininess or weak setting, especially in custards and creams. Some plant ingredients also add strong flavours like coconut or soy, affecting the final taste. Heat resistance is another issue, as fillings can melt, leak or lose structure during baking."

While Sushil Setia says, "The biggest challenge is achieving creaminess and stability without dairy. Plant fats and proteins behave very differently, especially in pastries. Another issue is flavour, some plant ingredients leave aftertastes if not handled properly. Clean labels also limit options, so formulation needs to be smart, not complicated."

Nut and seed purées, like the almond paste, peanut butter, pistachio butter and even pumpkin seed butter or tahini, bring a





"Understanding emulsification, crystallisation, temperature control, and ingredient interactions allows me to create stable fillings."

Mukesh Rawat, PAN India Chef, 2m cocoa

rich, creamy texture. All of these butters and flavour profiles have opened new avenues in the world of pastry fillings.

Global Fusion and Regional Flavours

Flavour mashups are everywhere these days, and pastry chefs are having a field day. They're pulling in ideas from all over the world, mixing old-school flavours with new kinds of fillings. Take Japan, for example, mochi isn't just filled with plain azuki bean paste anymore. You'll find it stuffed with peanut butter or hazelnut cream. Over in Latin America, Pan Dulce gets an upgrade with guava jam and cream cheese, or maybe a hit of smoky mesquite caramel.

Chef Chandan Singh remarks, "Right now, Middle Eastern and East Asian cuisines inspire my filling flavours the most. Ingredients like pistachio, kataifi, and matcha bring depth without overpowering sweetness. I'm drawn to how these cuisines balance bitterness, nuttiness and floral notes so naturally. Latin American flavours like New York cheesecake and tropical fruits also influence my work, especially for richer pastries. Exploring global cuisines allows me to respect tradition while reimagining flavours in a pastry context."

Chef Mukesh Rawat affirmed, "Global

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cuisines play a huge role in inspiring my filling flavours, particularly Asian and Mediterranean cuisines. Asian flavours intrigue me for their balance of sweetness, acidity and umami; ingredients like miso, yuzu, matcha and sesame translate beautifully into pastry when handled with finesse. Mediterranean cuisines, on the other hand, inspire me through their use of nuts, citrus, olive oil and warm spices, which add depth and elegance to fillings."

He continues, "One unconventional filling I've worked with recently is toasted white chocolate infused with pepper. The inspiration was to push white chocolate beyond its natural sweetness and introduce warmth and depth without overpowering it. When used with restraint, the pepper enhances the creaminess of the chocolate rather than competing with it, adding a subtle heat that lingers on the palate."

Sushil Setia also talked about one of the fillings he experimented with, "One of the more experimental fillings I worked on recently was a millet-based praline with jaggery caramel and fermented nut paste. It was very different from standard fillings but surprisingly balanced. The idea was to use Indian ingredients in a modern way without losing familiarity." He continues, "Right now, I'm very inspired by Middle Eastern, Japanese and Indian regional flavours. Middle Eastern fillings bring richness with balance, Japanese flavours add subtlety and restraint, and Indian ingredients give warmth and depth. Mixing these influences carefully helps create flavours that feel new but still comfortable for customers."





"Good fillings should feel familiar, exciting, and effortless at the same time."

Sushil Setia, Founder, School of Bakery & Culinary Art

Honestly, it's all about "flavour tourism" now. Matcha, ube, black sesame, cardamom, hibiscus, saffron, chillies, chai, even gochujang, and these ingredients are popping up in pastries everywhere. So a modern bakery's pastry showcase might display all kinds of green tea–swirled éclairs, rose-water almond tarts and the classic French lemon curd tartlets all hanging out together in the same pastry case.

The Health-Driven Shift

People aren't just looking for a sweet fix anymore, they want pastries that taste amazing and actually offer something good for them. So, bakers are getting creative with protein-packed fillings. They're mixing things like dairy-based whey protein, plant-based proteins (like pea, soy or rice), collagen peptides and nut proteins into everything from custards to mousses. You'll even find chocolate and nut fillings with extra protein, turning desserts into snacks you can grab after a workout or when you want a treat that gives back.

Chef Chandan says, "I have experimented with protein-enriched fillings using ingredients like plant protein powders, especially for guests looking for healthier dessert options without compromising luxury. As a pastry chef, my main focus is on keeping the filling smooth, creamy, and indulgent, adding protein. I balance nutrition by using small, controlled amounts of protein and blending it with rich ingredients like nut pastes, plant cream, or fruit purées to avoid a chalky or dry texture." While Chef Mukesh asserts, "The main challenge is maintaining indulgence while enhancing nutritional value. Protein can affect texture, making fillings dense or chalky if not balanced correctly, so careful ingredient selection and hydration are essential. I focus on pairing proteins with naturally creamy bases and strong flavour profiles that mask any aftertaste."

He continues, "Fermented and gut-friendly ingredients add both flavour depth and functional benefits to pastries. I use ingredients like yogurt (or plant-based versions), sourdough starters and fermented fruit to create natural tang, improve aroma and enhance complexity. However, I use them carefully so they don't overpower sweetness or affect texture.

"Fermented ingredients play a refined and purposeful role in pastry, primarily for the depth and balance they bring to desserts." Chef Mukesh agrees, "Ingredients such as yogurt, kefir, sourdough starters, miso, and fermented fruit purées add natural acidity and complexity to fillings and creams. This helps cut through sweetness and enhance overall flavour without making desserts heavy."

Gut health is another big deal right now. Bakers are playing with fermented ingredients like kombucha reductions, yoghurt cultures and prebiotic fibres. They're swirling these into fruit curds, glazes and creamy fillings. We're seeing a new wave of pastry fillings that promise both indulgence and a nod to wellness.

Conclusion

Pastry chefs have more options for fillings than ever. They mix old favourites like crème pâtissière and jams with newer twists like almond-hazelnut gianduja or turmeric-tahini spreads. Food science backs them up, too. Chefs use things like hydrocolloids and fibres to get the right texture and make fillings last longer. They're not afraid to pull in flavours from all over the world or adapt to the latest dietary trends. ■

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Handling Post Bake

The Journey After the Oven

By Gita Hari

Not slated to consume your baked goods any time soon, then there are ways to store to keep them fresh and edible-worthy. After relishing a piece of pastry made some days back, have you wondered how its freshness, flavour and aesthetics have been retained.

Baking is an amalgam of art and science. It involves complex elements and adopting intricate details, and above all, mastery to achieve the perfect result. Prepared from dough or baked batter, baked goodies consist of pastries, bread, cakes, tarts, cookies and more. Molds, yeast and bacteria loom large to diminish their longevity. With immense efforts that go into baking, storing them correctly and safely impacts the shelf life of the prepared delicacies. Proper handling and storage keep baked goods fresh by minimising air exposure, moisture loss, and bacterial contamination. Packaging choices and hygiene practices further extend shelf life and safety.

Know Your Bakes First

The distinctive elements and ingredients of every baked dish have a bearing on its post-bake requirements. To retain maximum freshness, awareness of these variations is a must:

Pastries: To remain crisp, their dainty bits must be safeguarded from humidity.

Cakes/cupcakes: Lock moisture to keep them soft.

Biscuits/cookies: Airtight boxes since it gets stale if left uncovered.

Bread/rolls: Balmy environment is safe as they tend to get parched and dry.

Post-bake Cooling

Offering professional insights on safe cooling measures, Sehaj Ghuman, Executive Pastry Chef, Academy of Pastry and Culinary Arts India, says, "Allow baked goods to cool fully on wire racks for 1-2 hours post-baking. This stabilizes structure and prevents condensation

inside storage. Avoid stacking warm items to reduce the chances of steam making the items change texture."

Improper cooling leads to moisture buildup which encourages microbial growth such as mold and bacteria. "Always allow the product to cool completely before storage. Excess moisture can also make baked goods soggy, sticky or dense instead of crisp or tender as intended. Improper cooling can also reduce shelf life and lead to inconsistent quality," says Chef Ayushi Agarwal, Founder-Creme Cookies.

How to Avoid Contamination

Ayushi Agarwal suggests some easy steps to avoid bacterial growth and cross contamination in baked treats, "Storage and packaging materials should be clean, and dry as well to avoid contamination. Use the right storage technique for each product." For instance, dry items like cookies and biscuits should be stored in airtight containers at room temperature while moist items like cakes should be kept in the refrigerator to prolong shelf life.



Pallavi Ved

Chef Sehaj Ghuman outlines, "Store different flavours or allergens separately with dividers or dedicated containers. Clean surfaces, tools and hands thoroughly before handling; use fresh parchment between layers. Wherever possible, try to maintain separate work equipment for common allergens, like nuts, eggs, fish and shellfish."

Shelf-life Scope

Can shelf-life be extended?

Baker Pallavi Ved, Founder - Velvet Fine Chocolates, answers, "Baked items tend to dry out, become firm, fragile, lose flavour and develop microbial growth. It is a struggle to retain their freshness and make them safe for a long period of time. Knowledge of the interplay of ingredients is crucial for appropriate storage of baked products."

Fat composition, ingredient interplays, environmental instability are some of the causes that influence the lifespan and their quality. Bakes rich in fat (laminated ones like croissants, Danish pastry) tend to absorb odours, and are susceptible to drastic change in their textures. Melting butter lessens flakiness.





Chef Sehaj Ghuman

Ayushi notes, "Always store in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. Excess heat and humidity can accelerate spoilage and texture degradation."

Refrigerate Right

Preserving baked goods in a fridge can be tricky and complex as it may work for some baked stuff but prove to dehydrate others. Cream-based foods need refrigeration to avoid turning rancid.

Freezing is an ideal way to stretch their shelf life upto 3 months, while maintaining their texture and quality. But make sure to cover in plastic first and a final aluminium foil wrap to keep away freezer burn. Pallavi Ved guides, "To thaw easily, portion out before freezing. This way, you can take out just what is required for the moment and need not thaw the entire lot. Refreezing compromises on quality and texture."

Take care to thaw the baked goods slowly at room temperature or in the refrigerator. Then, reheat them in the oven (not microwave) to regain a fresh and new product. "Speedy defrosting can lead to unbalanced texture and diminished quality. Thaw the product in proper conditions and ensure that you follow first in and first out, with Label with dates to track freshness. Freezing ensures the product is out of danger zone," warns Sehaj Ghuman.

Humidification

Given to temperature fluctuations, precipitation will trigger microbial growth besides rendering the item soggy. Regulating heat and humidity is important to avert dehydration or excess moisture. A fruity tart can release moisture resulting in mushy crusts and structural marring.

Customised storage techniques are necessitated for different bakes in industrial kitchens. Cream and fruity tarts are inclined to get sodden and putrefaction can happen with improper storing practices. Moisture control is the cornerstone in the storage of moisture-laden pastries while those low on it like puff pastries, shortbread cookies, pie crusts gravitate to become hard and stale.





Ayushi Agarwal

Packaging Protocols

Vacuum seal, resealable pouches for smaller baked goods are ideal.

Ayushi Agarwal, suggests some easy post-bake steps to avoid microbial infestations and cross contamination, "Storage and packaging materials should be clean, and dry as well to avoid contamination. Use the right storage



technique for each product." Absorbing odours of other dishes from the fridge is an issue which can be averted if properly wrapped or stored in airtight boxes like tupperware. Avoid quashing pastries, and remove excess air before zip locking.

According to Chef Sehaj Ghuman, "For room temperature storage, use airtight containers for short-term, 1-3 days of storage. Line the air tight containers with parchment paper to block moisture transfer between items or use bio degradable plastic wrap or zip locks for larger baked items."

In addition to lengthening their lifespan, the underlying idea to preserve baked goods is also to steer clear of diseases caused by food contamination and to avoid wastage. ■



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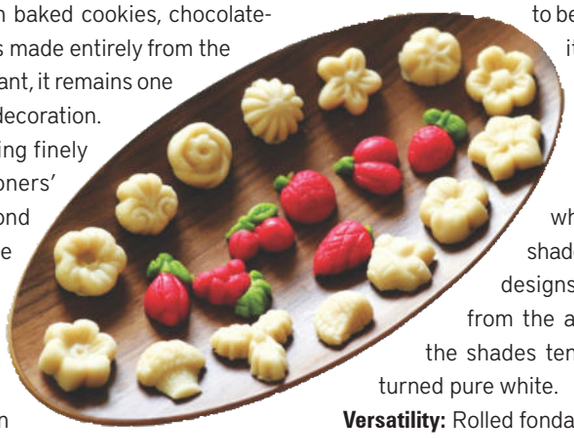


The Sculptable Delight

By Nikita Madan

Marzipan is a ready-to-eat confection long associated with European sweet shops. Prepared from ground almonds, sugar and egg whites, it is often coloured and shaped into lifelike fruits and vegetables. Its firm, clay-like consistency makes it ideal for sculpting decorative elements, which is why bakers frequently use it to craft ornamental fruits, flowers and other cake decorations. Marzipan also appears in baked cookies, chocolate-coated candies and fruit-shaped treats made entirely from the paste. Alongside buttercream and fondant, it remains one of the most popular choices for cake decoration.

Traditionally, marzipan is made using finely ground blanched almonds, confectioners' sugar, egg whites and a touch of almond extract to enhance the flavour. As the almonds are ground, their natural oils blend with the sugar and egg whites, creating a smooth, pliable mixture that can be easily moulded or rolled into sheets. Marzipan is known for its distinctly sweet, nutty almond taste and a soft, chewy texture with a slight graininess from the finely ground nuts.



Marzipan vs. Fondant: What's the Difference?

Marzipan and fondant are both widely used in cake decoration and sculpting, yet they differ in several important ways.

Ingredients: The primary distinction lies in their composition. Fondant is mainly made from confectioners' sugar, corn syrup, and water, giving it the character of a traditional icing. Marzipan, on the other hand, is based on almond meal blended with sugar and egg whites, resulting in a firmer, more structured paste.

Taste: Marzipan carries a rich almond flavour with greater depth, while fondant is predominantly sweet with little inherent taste. Some decorators add a few drops of almond extract to fondant to imitate marzipan's flavour.

Texture: Marzipan has a dense, clay-like consistency that allows it to be shaped and even baked while retaining its form. Fondant is softer and more pliable, making it suitable for draping over cakes, but it cannot withstand baking.

Colour: Fondant is naturally white, which makes it easy to tint into vibrant shades, ideal for wedding cakes and colourful designs. Marzipan has a natural cream tone from the almonds. Although it can be coloured, the shades tend to appear muted, and it cannot be turned pure white.

Versatility: Rolled fondant spreads smoothly over cakes and is ideal for fine decorative details like flowers and figurines. Marzipan, while excellent for sculpting, can become quite firm, especially after baking, and is better suited for moulded decorative elements.

Conclusion

Marzipan traditions vary widely from country to country. In Germany, it is crafted into shapes like potatoes, loaves of bread and even tiny pink pigs for New Year's Eve. In France, marzipan is often fashioned into small candy forms and frequently dipped in chocolate. In the United States, while marzipan is less common, it tends to make an appearance during the festive holiday season.

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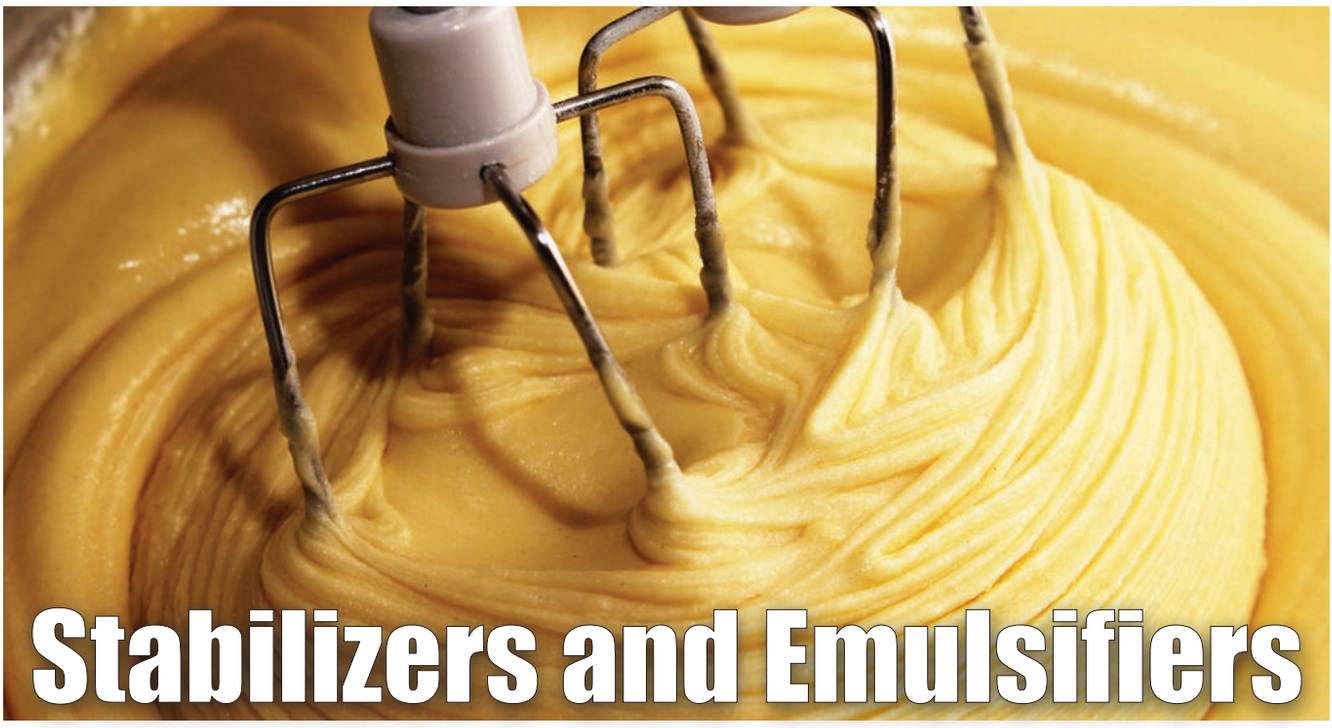
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Stabilizers and Emulsifiers

By Nikita Madan

Look at the food label of almost any product in your pantry, and you'll likely find emulsifiers and stabilizers. These unsung heroes of the food industry are the reason oil and water can mix, creating the smooth, stable and satisfying textures consumers love.

Consumers anticipate a consistent quality and eating experience from foods. This is achieved in part through the use of stabilizers, thickeners and gelling agents that provide products with uniform texture and structure. Many of these additives are derived from natural sources such as proteins and starches, though some are also produced synthetically for cost efficiency. Their functions often overlap, working together to deliver stability, mouthfeel and shelf life.

What Are Stabilizers?

Stabilizers are substances that help maintain the consistency, texture and appearance of food products. They keep ingredients evenly distributed, enhance mouthfeel and prevent separation over time. Common examples include pectin, xanthan gum, gelatin and corn starch, each used in specific applications depending on the desired result.

What Are Emulsifiers?

Emulsification is the process of forming a uniform mixture, or emulsion, between two substances that normally do not mix, such as oil and water, much like the structure of milk. The substances that make this possible are called emulsifiers, also known as surfactants.

How Emulsifiers Work?

Emulsifiers enable oil and water to combine by lowering the surface tension between them, allowing tiny droplets to form and remain dispersed. Each emulsifier molecule is amphiphilic, meaning it has two parts: a hydrophilic (water-loving) end and a hydrophobic (oil-loving) end. This dual nature allows the molecule to interact with both phases simultaneously.

How Stabilizers Work?

While emulsifiers help form an emulsion, they do not always guarantee that it will remain stable. Over time, droplets of the same type can collide and merge, causing separation. Stabilizers prevent this by creating a network that keeps droplets apart, maintaining the product's consistency.

Why Use Emulsifiers and Stabilizers?

We often hear that oil and water don't mix. Yet in many foods, they do, thanks to emulsifiers and stabilizers. These ingredients are the reason protein shakes blend smoothly, ice cream melts more slowly and cakes remain light and moist. They improve taste, texture, appearance and shelf life across a wide range of products.

Selecting the right emulsifier or stabilizer for a specific application is essential. An inappropriate choice can result in product failure, consumer dissatisfaction and costly reformulations. From plant-based beverages and dairy alternatives to confections and baked goods, these ingredients play a vital role in delivering the sensory qualities consumers seek glossy icings, fluffy cakes and smooth beverages.

Stabilizers: Guar gum, Xanthan gum, Gum Arabic, Locust bean gum (carob bean gum), Agar-agar and carrageenan, Gelatin and some stabilizers are chemically synthesized to provide greater control over shelf life. However, their use is often limited due to growing consumer demand for natural labelling.

Emulsifiers: Common emulsifiers include monoglycerides, soybean phospholipids, Diacetyl Tartaric Acid Esters of Monoglycerides (DATEM), Sodium Stearoyl Lactylate (SSL) and Calcium Stearoyl Lactylate (CSL). Natural emulsifiers like egg yolk, soy lecithin, mustard, beeswax, carrageenan, gellan gum, and guar gum. ■

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Date	05-06 August 2026	7 August 2026	8 August 2026
Eligibility	18 Years or Older and Trained or Currently Working in Pastry, Bakery, or Dessert Arts.	Professional Chefs, 24+ years	Home Cooks, 18+ years
Team Format	1 Contestant + 1 Mentor	Individual	Team of 2 Home Cooks
Participation Fee	Applicable, Refer Website	Applicable, Refer Website	Applicable, Refer Website
Max Participants	8 Individuals	8 Individuals	8 Teams
Prize	Pastry Queen India Title + International Trip + Training	Master Baker Title + International Trip + Training	₹25K / ₹15K / ₹10K + Gifts + Media Coverage
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Duration	2 Days	1 Day (6 hrs Competition)	1 Day (7 hrs total)
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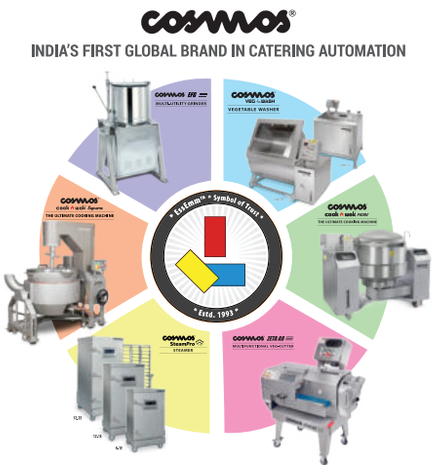
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Under the brand COSMOS, EssEmm has revolutionized kitchen automation with its innovative range of products. From COSMOS CMG Multi-Utility Tilting Wet Grinders to Potato Peelers, Dough Kneaders, Cutter Mixers, Instant Rice and Masala Grinders, and Coconut Scrapers, the company has set industry benchmarks for quality and efficiency.

The COSMOS Cook Wok – Cooking Mixer, designed for large-scale cooking,



features a SUS 304 stainless steel bowl, auto igniter, variable speed inverter, and an easy-tilt system, making bulk curry and gravy preparation seamless. Similarly, the COSMOS Zeta A8 Multi-Functional Vegetable Cutting Machine offers unparalleled precision in slicing, chopping, and dicing with its belt-feed and hopper-feed system, ensuring speed and consistency.

Expanding its reach beyond India, EssEmm exports its products to the Middle East, Singapore, the USA, and Australia. Partnering with renowned international brands, the company introduces advanced food machinery tailored to Indian kitchens, upholding performance, energy efficiency, and quality standards.

With a commitment to innovation, reliability, and customer satisfaction, EssEmm Corporation continues to shape the future of commercial kitchens.

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Fortune Rises: AWL Agri Business Disrupts the B2B Segment with Professional Cake Premixes

The landscape of the Indian bakery industry is undergoing a significant transformation, moving from traditional scratch-baking to a model defined by precision, speed, and scalability. Leading this charge is AWL Agri Business Limited (formerly known as Adani Wilmar Limited), which has officially expanded its expansive Food FMCG portfolio with the launch of the Fortune Cake Premix range. Specifically engineered for the B2B and HoReCa sectors, this launch marks a strategic move to provide high-performance solutions for professional kitchens.

The new range debuted with three meticulously crafted variants: Classic Vanilla, Premium Vanilla, and Premium Chocolate. Available in 5 KG professional-grade packs, these premixes are designed to serve as a reliable foundation for bakery chefs, cloud kitchens, and large-scale catering operations. In a high-pressure kitchen environment, the primary challenge is maintaining consistency across hundreds of batches; Fortune's formulation addresses this by



ensuring uniform rise, texture, and flavor every time.

Understanding the unique dietary landscape of the Indian market, AWL has developed these premixes with a 100% egg-free formulation. This not only caters to the massive vegetarian consumer base but also provides a safer, more inclusive option for health-conscious and egg-intolerant diners without compromising on the moistness or structural integrity of the cake.

Beyond mere convenience, the Fortune Cake Premix range acts as a "blank canvas" for culinary creativity. While the premix handles the complex chemistry of baking, it leaves ample room for chefs to infuse their signature style through unique fillings, syrups, and artisanal toppings. By streamlining the preparation process, the product allows businesses to reduce labor costs and prep time, effectively increasing their operational velocity.

As AWL Agri Business continues its pivot toward becoming a diversified packaged foods powerhouse in 2026, the Fortune Cake Premix launch stands as a testament to their commitment to quality. For the professional baker, it represents the perfect marriage of the trusted Fortune legacy and the modern requirements of high-efficiency patisserie.

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"I am a mix of discipline, creativity and a sweet tooth with ambition."

Deepak Dhyani, Café de Partie, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore

By Sharmila Chand



Deepak's eight-year professional journey is marked by perseverance, skill-building and a sincere dedication to the bakery and pastry craft. Today, he continues to channel his passion and expertise exclusively in his current role as a Chef de Partie (CDP) in the Bakery & Pastry division at Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, where he plays an integral part in delivering exceptional culinary experiences.

Deepak's professional journey began with a formal foundation in Hotel Management, which strengthened his theoretical knowledge and introduced him to the core principles of food production. This academic grounding, combined with early industrial training, gave him a solid start and encouraged his passion for the bakery and pastry field.

Throughout his career, he has demonstrated strong adaptability, quick learning and the willingness to take on new challenges. His role has often involved supporting kitchen leadership, mentoring junior staff and coordinating with team members to ensure smooth daily operations. Deepak's practical experience is complemented by a basic understanding of kitchen-related computer functions, enabling him to manage recipe documentation, inventory notes and production records effectively.

He values teamwork, continuous learning, and upgrading his skills to match modern culinary trends. His interests outside the kitchen, such as traveling and sports, bring balance to his life and contribute to his creativity and enthusiasm at work.

In an exclusive interview, he tells us about his baking philosophy, favourite ingredient and more.....

According to you what are the hot trends in the Indian bakery industry?

Indian flavours in global formats–think Rasmalai Tarts, Pistachio Croissants, Millet Brownies and gourmet breads with a desi twist.

How did you become a Pastry Chef?

I didn't choose pastry–pastry chose me. One baking experiment at home, and I was happily hooked for life.

Your baking philosophy?

Bake with intention. If the heart isn't in it, the dessert knows.

Your hot-selling items?

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What is the current demand?

Personalised cakes, healthier bakes and Instagram-worthy desserts that taste as good as they look.

How do you take care of health quotient?

By swapping–not cutting. Brown butter instead of margarine, jaggery instead of refined sugar and millet blends instead of plain flour.

Your favourite tool?

My whisk. It's where every creation begins–simple but powerful.

Tell us top 3 challenges for a bakery chef?

- Temperamental temperatures
- Maintaining quality during rush hours
- Creative burnout–but we rise again!

What do you love about your job?

Turning simple ingredients into edible happiness.

Your strength?

Precision with a pinch of imagination.

Passion besides baking?

Photography–especially capturing the soul of food.

How do you de-stress?

Kneading dough. It's therapy that tastes good.

Your dreams?

To build a bakery that becomes a city's comfort spot.

Your mantra for success?

Stay curious. Keep creating. Never fear the mess.

Favourite ingredient?

Lemon zest–it wakes up any dessert with its magic.

Chef who inspires you?

Mukesh Rawat–the Picasso of Pastry. His flavour pairings are genius.

Your comfort food?

A warm butter croissant with hot chai.

Favourite bakery item to prepare?

Éclairs. They demand patience and reward you with elegance.

Share with us a fun kitchen story?

Once a piping bag burst during a rush hour–my entire arm became a chocolate mousse sleeve. Customers thought it was a new chef's creation!

Advice to young aspiring bakery chefs?

Master the basics, respect the process, and remember–your best teacher is your next mistake!

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